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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

LAST MONTH in AMAZING STORIES the boss editor, Howard Browne, sat himself down and began the laborious job of writing his editorial. As he stared at the typewriter he asked us with a certain plaintive note in his voice if we could suggest something interesting to write about. We grinned sadistically and told him he was on his own. So what did he do? He wrote 110 lines telling how he was getting ready to write the editorial for the month—and didn't say a darned thing!

NOW WE ask you, is that fair? The readers want more in an editorial than that. As a matter of fact, one of them made a point of writing in to us to say so. Joe Gibson of Jersey City felt that an editor should be able to think of literally hundreds of interesting things to talk about, what with a comfortable swivel chair backing him up and a built-in blonde secretary giving moral support. He suggested that we might borrow the gimmick from the "Keeping Posted" of the Satevepost, and pass along some chucklesome tidbits gleaned from the office correspondence. In other words, dress up the old column with some dashes of Hollywood gossip and make the reader feel right at home.

OR, HE SUGGESTED further, the editor might remark lightly upon some topic of professional interest, giving the reader a sort of behind-the-scene view on what's going on in that particular field. Or, if he felt like it, Joe suggested that the editor get a bit chummy with some of his competition in the field and discuss editors, comparing for example, the two charming femme editors Ray Palmer latched on to (Bea Mahaffey and Marge Budwig) to Bill Hamling of FA. The point could be made that Bill is a much more experienced editor than the gals, but on the other hand, his legs look like hell.

"Something in black—more conservative, you know"

JOE GIBSON had another good idea for ye ed, saying that he might present the professional editor's personal attitude toward science fiction. Such a topic undoubtedly would prove of great interest to all fans and writers who never are quite sure whether the editor is a mechanical rejecting machine, or a human being. (Nope, we won't answer that!)

THE GENTLEMAN from Jersey City had another good idea to offer. Why not give the fans a bit more space in the editorial column? Aren't they, after all, the ones who buy the magazine and follow it avidly? Why not give out with a little choice gossip on some of the fans each month, and perhaps relate what's new in the fan world and thereby give a bit more publicity to a worthy following. That too is a good source of material for an editorial.

ALL IN ALL the editorial should not be a difficult thing to write. We can sum up everything Joe Gibson had to suggest by saying that the editorial is reserved for the cream of the magazine—the dessert. It is the magic wand that transports the readers, bless them, past the receptionist's desk into a mystical sanctum of miracles—from ghosties to blue-skinned Plutonians. An editor should carry a little black book with him at all times, jotting down a point here, an item there, to be used later when the time for writing the editorial finally arrives.

SO WE ASK you, boss editor, just what's so hard about writing an editorial? Now you take us on FA for instance. We're just about ready to sit down and write our editorial for the month. A simple task, really. Now let's see, what will we write about? ..... WLH

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fantastic ADVENTURES

OCTOBER, 1950

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The MASTERS

By L. Ron Hubbard

There was a harsh laughter from a great distance as Jan Palmer peered into the diamond.

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# of SLEEP

The Jinn world was pure make-believe, of course, and yet Jan Palmer found himself suddenly thrown into it with a grim reality

FOREWORD

The unhappy advent of an Ifrit, one of the Jinn so ably described in the Arabian Nights, into the workaday world of Seattle, Washington

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some time since, gave more adventure to Jan Palmer than his scholarly stomach could quite tolerate. The Jinn, Zongri, had been imprisoned in a copper jar by Sulayman in ancient times and the jar had come into Jan's hands. As harrassed president of Bering Steamship Corporation, young Jan did not need the further curse which was laid upon him by Zongri as a "reward" for being let out. The Curse of Eternal Wakefulness thrust Jan into the discovery that man, when he sleeps, wanders in far and unknown lands. Jan's sleep-self proved to be a redoubtable, brave but unconservative sailor named Tiger in the land of the Jinn where Ifrits were masters and the sleep-souls of humans were the slaves. Tiger, the other self of Jan, thrived on mischief and punishment and made news in a world where sudden death was commonplace. The dismayed Jan found that Tiger was much too much for him. Incarcerated for murder because of Zongri and greedy relatives while "awake" in Seattle, doomed by the mischief of Tiger while "awake" in the land of the Jinn, Jan was in serious trouble in both worlds. His only solace was Alice, his secretary who, when she "slept" was actually Wanna, a temple dancer in the world of the Jinn.*

At last, mastering the problem of his duality and solving, in a sea action in the world of the Jinn, the Curse of Eternal Wakefulness, Jan became, as himself, truly the head for Bering Steam for in Seattle he was now partly Tiger and in the world of the Jinn, as Tiger, became a Baron of the Realm because he was partly the brainy Jan.

So matters stood for some time. But Tiger's nature was unruly and, in the world of the Jinn, little by little began to outweigh the good sense of Jan. Escapade after escapade brought Tiger and Wanna his dancing girl down the ladder in the favor of the Jinn. Humans in the world of sleep were, after all, slaves. At length, after nearly oversetting the government itself, Tiger, as punishment, was returned to the fleet as a common sailor. As Jan in this world he became more and more immersed in scholarly concerns and became less and less Tiger. Wanna, too, began to separate her natures as time went on and became more the dancing girl of the Jinn and more the authoritarian housewife in Seattle.

At the time our story opens, Tiger had managed promotion up to the rank of gunner's mate in a man-o-war in the world of the Jinn. His "awake" self Jan had become more and more timid and desirous of escape from his responsibilities with Bering Steam. The gulf had widened until each part of the dual nature was less and less aware of the other each time the border between the worlds was crossed.

Ramus, ruler of the principal nation of the Jinn, had become old. She despatched an expedition to the land of Arif-Emir who owned a strange gem called the Two-World Diamond. Arif-Emir refused to part with his stone, though Jinn custom seemed to indicate that it should be lent. A war was declared and Admiral Tombo with a fleet of twenty sail was sent to beat Arif-Emir into submission. Aboard Tombo's flagship was Tiger. And while Jan slept in Seattle—

CHAPTER I

TIGER, for some time, had been trying to attract the attention of Admiral Tombo. Fifteen enemy ships of the line, under the command of Arif-Emir, had ceased to

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* *SLAVES OF SLEEP, Shasta House Publishers, Chicago,* $3.00.

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swing restively to their anchors in Boulou Bay and, in a fluttering burst of sails, had begun to swing toward the harbor mouth, obviously bent on sailing out and giving battle to the twenty men-o-war which so long had dared them.

In the fighting top of the *Graceful Jinnia* Tiger had long since spotted the turbulence on the decks of the enemy in Boulou Bay and had long since begun to make said intelligence clear to the quarterdeck below. He had begun in a very naval manner, saying, "Ahoy the quarterdeck! Enemy standing by to get underweigh!" He had progressed through, "Ahoy below! Enemy vessels slipping cables!" And now he cried, "Hey, you fatheads! Arif-Emir is comin' out to eat us alive!"

Admiral Tombo looked like a fat scarlet doll, mostly hat, from Tiger's height of a hundred and thirty feet of mast. He was in a fevered discussion with his staff and the captains of his ships, here assembled in the bright morning. The rage in their voices rose and fell, the click of their fangs punctuating their angry speech. Ifrits, when angry, can cause a considerable stir. There was no penetrating their din; three duels had been challenged in a hot ten minutes and one face had been slapped loudly enough for the sound to reach the fighting top where Tiger stood the watch.

Tiger, big, brawny and human, sprawled against the lip of the basket and looked around at the waiting fleet. The ships of Ramus, the Magnificent, Ruler of the Jinn, stood to hand, few sails set, sun flashes on their brass canyon, fresh spray upon their gilt scrolling. It was a brisk morning and a chop sea was running in a fifteen knot wind. Every man-o-war present had spotted the sudden activity of the bottled enemy and a laundry bag of signal flags stood stiffly and urgently quivering from the halyards of each.

Landward the cream-sailed ships of Arif-Emir were falling into battle station behind their pennoned leader, making an increasing line of battle. The flagship, probably with Arif-Emir on her quarterdeck, was opposite Gallows Point already and her bow was beginning to lift to the chop sea which extended just within the harbor mouth. There they came, fifteen ships, five first-raters of eighty guns and ten frigates of twenty-four.

Tiger looked down at the wrangling captains and their angry admiral. Bored, Tiger put a brass trumpet to his mouth and tried again. "Hey, fatso! Your pal Arif is going to dine on you for dinner."

Still none looked up from below. Tiger had his orders. He was a gunner's mate, sent up here to take a lookout because of some words he had had with the gunnery officer the day before, gunner's mates not ordinarily being required to perform such duties. A lookout was supposed to stick to his post. But following orders was no long habit with Tiger. He put the trumpet in its clips, swung over the side of the basket, wrapped his cap around the topping lift which led down to the quarterdeck and, with this to protect his hands, swung his heels into space and swooped down like a meteorite to the quarterdeck. He dropped to the planking, knocked out a spark which had generated with the friction of the passage downward, and put his cap on the back of his head. He advanced toward Tombo.

"I won't have it! I won't have it!" Admiral Tombo was screaming. "My orders are to stay on station here! I'll not go away without the diamond! I won't leave until the transports come with marines! I won't!"

"Condemn you!" howled a big Ifrit, "*Your* ship isn't out of food!

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You don't have a mutinous crew! We can't maintain this blockade and we won't! Ramus is dead! You heard the despatch. How do we know what's going on at home? Who'll fight for our preference at court? She's dead and that cancels her orders! Arif-Emir is never going to come out. I say sail for home and Ahriman take the diamond!"

TIGER shouldered through them. He was a human, they were Ifrits. He could not become an officer in this land, being human, but he couldn't be severely punished either, being valuable. He tapped Admiral Tombo on the shoulder.

"If you're going to sail for home, you better get underweigh. Arif-Emir is standing out of the harbor with all sails drawing."

One captain had been about to thrust him aside but his news struck them into motionless statues for an instant. Then they scrambled for the landward shrouds and the first one who reached twenty feet from the deck sung out: "It's Arif-Emir!"

The captains below him were confused but still ugly. They turned back on Tombo. "Your commission is from Ramus. She's dead! I don't recognize your commission. Whatever the value of the diamond, I'm sailing for home!" He dropped over the rail, balanced his eight feet of bulk on the boat boom and then slid down into his gig. With mutters and glares, the other captains followed him. The Marid boat crews one by one presented oars, took aboard each one his captain, let fall and swept away across the choppy brilliant sea.

Tombo was at the rail. All the while they were leaving he was shaking his fist. "Damn you! By the Seven Sheiks come back here! You'll stand to and fight! *I'll* fight. I'll whip them with one ship! You're mutineers!"

Tiger watched it passionlessly. Finally, he tapped Tombo on the shoulder again. "Sir, if you're going to make good that promise, we better be getting some sails set and some guns run out. Arif's last frigate has cleared Gallow's Point."

The admiral took one last look at the departing gigs and then spat into the sea. He turned around, hitched up his pants, pushed his cocked hat into a more solid position and ran his eye along the maindeck battery.

"Mr. Malek," he said to his waiting lieutenent, "Beat to quarters!"

Tombo looked at Tiger. "What are you doing with your hat on the quarterdeck?"

Tiger shrugged and compromised. He took himself off the quarterdeck, dropped down to the port battery and began to tally off his gun crews as his men poured up to the frantic roll of drums.

Sailing commands rang out from the sailing master and topmen dropped billows of canvas down into the sunlight. With thunderings to match the drums the sails were sheeted home. The helm came up, the braces sang and creaked to the strain, the buck of the vessel grew short and businesslike. The *Graceful Jinnia* stood up to meet the enemy, one ship against fifteen.

Two hours later she was a bloodied and shuddering ruin, her every spar gone, her sheets trailing in the sea, her sodden hulk lifting less and less to the running sea. More and more her castle lifted, less and less of her bow was shown and then she plunged with a bubbling sigh into the littered water. The tangled flag of Ramus, twisted about a staff, was black against the frothing maelstrom for an instant and then the ship was gone.

Admiral Tombo, the sailing master, Tiger and twenty men, the remainder

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of her crew, were prisoners aboard the *Tong-Malou,* flagship of Arif.

CHAPTER II

JAN PALMER awoke with an aching head and gazed out of his windows at a fog-whitened Seattle. All and he were distinctly not well.

He felt his temples and confusedly looked at his hands. But they were not covered with blood as he had supposed, oddly enough, they would be. Here he was in his own bedroom, there was his wife Alice sleeping prettily with tousled hair flowing across the pillow, there was the harbor and the low tufted fog from out of which came the snores of perturbed shipping—perhaps one or two of his own ships since he was the sole owner of the Bering Steamship Corporation. He was sure he should not be here and yet he was here. He was certain he should be half dead and yet he was alive. What had happened?

Dimly, he felt memories slipping away from him. Gropingly he tried to capture them and examine them. For an instant he recalled a long gone time when he had been present at the opening of a strange and ancient copper jar of Arabian design. For a moment he heard and felt the breath of a Jinn which had flowed swiftly from the jar snarling threats and growing hugely. For a moment he saw the man who had opened that mysterious jar and saw the man fall dead and heard himself being cursed with the "Curse of Eternal Wakefulness". Then there were blurred recollections of never sleeping, of passing from this land to a land of sleep, a land where Jinns ruled and all humans were slaves and where all humans went when they slept. And he recalled himself as Tiger, a redoubtable and mischievous sailor in that strange land of sleep and how, as Tiger he had become strong and how as himself Tiger had become wise. But the recall of that meeting of self in the Land of Awake and self in the Land of Sleep faded and grew tangled like some nightmare one cannot quite grasp. He felt like a man whose vitality was ebbing from him. He felt as though some necessary portion of him were slipping away and he could not tell how or why.

For many years now he had not slept but, transferring from the Land of Awake where he was Jan Palmer into the Land of Sleep where he was Tiger, he had lived a dual and highly fascinating life. In the Land of Awake he ruled Bering Steamship Corporation with a vigor which had never manifested itself before the opening of that jar and the subsequent adventures had made him Tiger. Asleep he was awake again in the Land of the Jinn where, as Tiger, he carried out an amusing role. It had been a highly saitsfactory continuance of a beginning which had seemed harshly adventurous. The Jinn ruled humanity when humanity slept for the soul wandered far in sleep. But Jan was suddenly unaware that his soul had ever wandered anywhere. One last datum tried to penetrate his wits: The soul of Alice, his wife, was Wanna in the land of the Jinn and Wanna was waiting for Tiger somewhere in the world of sleep. And then that fact too was gone.

SUDDENLY his headache vanished. He looked at the fog, he listened to the hoots and snarls of vessels in the harbor, he thought of his duties in running Bering Steam and he was suddenly afraid.

Of what was he afraid? He tried to answer that. He could not. He thought of the desks and the vice-presidents and then he knew. He thought with a shudder of their spectacled eyes, of the orders and forms

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Just before the captives went the golden sedan of Arif-Emir. With a wand, Arif

they thrust at him, of the decisions they required him to make. He thought of the toil and monotony and he shivered. Something had slipped from him. He could not tell what it was, he could only sense for a moment that part of him, a vital and terribly important part of him, the part that was all nerve and laughter, had gone. And then he didn't remember that he had remembered that anything had been taken from him. He stood, shallow-chested, pale and afraid and watched the fog deepen over the water.

Alice got up and slipped into a robe. She smiled at him sleepily and then looked again. She gazed around her as though sensing some change and stared back at Jan.

"Funny," she said, "I must have had a dream. I could swear I could have told you about it a moment ago." She frowned a moment and then shook her head. "No. It slipped away from me." Then she looked at him. "Are you well?"

"I feel all right," said Jan shakily.

"Well! I've got to get you downtown for the board meeting," she said. And she began to dress.

He did not realize she had changed, that something was gone from her as well, for all memory of it was gone in him. He saw a businesslike wife, concerned with her husband's affairs, married too long to have any romance left about him. He thought about the board meeting and he saw with a shiver of fear the spectacled faces. And then he began to dress. It was a dull and terrible day.

"I think I'll go sailing," he said suddenly.

"You'll get to that board meeting!" said Alice. "Sailing indeed! With all

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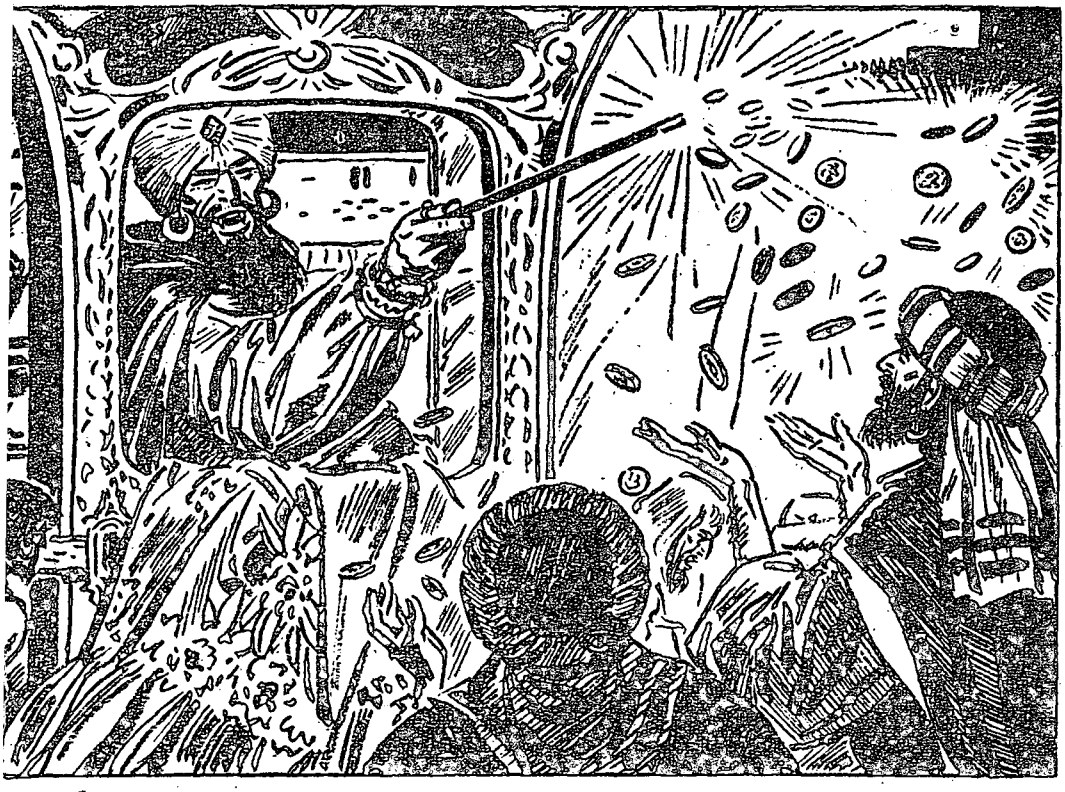

was waving blessings at his people sending a shower of golden coins among them.

that fog. Not a breath of air and every ferry boat apt to run you down!"

Miserably he laid aside the sneakers he had picked up and grasped his business shoes.

"Yes, Alice," he said meekly.

CHAPTER III

THERE was no tragedy in Balou; it was a holiday. Here in the land of the Jinn, where human souls were captive to the Ifrits, their masters, there were few enough occasions for gala displays. But today there was one. All that morning there had been the thundering of broadsides beyond the breakwaters and great billows of white smoke had hidden the extent of the action there. And the crowds had gathered and watched from Gallow's Point. But now the entire town of Balou was filled with ringing bells and waving banners. It had watched in anxiety, for its food came from across wide seas and the blockade had placed roasted rat as the highest item on a bill-o-fare. And it cheered now because the blockade was broken and Arif-Emir had thrown wide the granaries where had been stored the military rations he had saved. And the crowd cheered as well out of an enthusiasm for any victory, even one tallied to the credit of Arif-Emir.

It was afternoon and the shadows were long when the parade came up from the wharfs. First there were marids, dull and stupid servants of the Jinn, blowing long and brassy horns. Then there were humans pulling chariots full of Arif's officers. And then there came Arif, solitary and tremendous in a golden sedan chair, high on human backs. And behind him came the captives.

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The crowd cheered dutifully when the officers went by—to have done otherwise would have been to bring marids upon it swinging their long whips. It waved small flags and tossed caps for Arif, for he had sent ahead the order about the food. And then it began to scream and huzzah in earnest for the captives.

Admiral Tombo, sea-stained and powder-scorched, disdained the chains which gripped him and pulled him on and bowed from right to left. His yellow fangs were gleaming as he grinned. Eight and a half feet tall—tall even for an Ifrit in the World of Sleep—he made a very impressive sight. But after he had gone a few blocks it began to be impressed upon his rather pompous mind that these cheers were being volleyed at a target slightly behind him. Tombo glared around to see who was usurping some of the glory of being a captive, hard won from the sea. But it was not Mr. Malek the sailing master, for Mr. Malek walked in sad dejection, having calculated that the only end to this would be an execution. So it was not Mr. Malek. Tombo looked further back. Then, with a shock of horror, he looked ahead of him.

Just before the captives went the golden sedan of Arif-Emir. With a wand, Arif was waving blessings at his people. With the enormous pomposity of which only an Ifrit is capable, Arif was grandly making magic signs, pieces of gold, crosses and stars and other things, shedding his glorious light upon the multitude. And from his turban light was also shed, the somewhat more pure glory of the fabulous Two World Diamond.

Tombo looked anxiously behind him again and gone was his rancor and in its place was solid fear. For six of the captive sailors of the *Graceful Jinnia* had taken upon their shoulders one Tiger and Tiger, with a pomposity of which Arif was never guilty, was shedding his clowning light upon the multitude and with a stick he had picked up in the street, was making somewhat altered signs in the air. And the crowd of human slaves who lined the walks, each time that Tiger moved that stick, screamed in convulsions of laughter.

THE ADMIRAL tried to yank back on his chains and get to the human gunner's mate who so dangerously mimicked Arif. But the chains were tightly fixed to the rear of Arif's sedan chair. Tombo tried to shout but he could not be heard. There was anxiety in his drowned voice for here clearly went all hope of Arif's mercy. Tombo had hopes of that mercy. Perhaps Arif would not have heard that Ramus was dead, perhaps Arif would make Tombo an emissary for peace terms back to his own land. And there, confound it, was Tiger, brawny and irrepressible, making a fool out of Arif in the Emir's own town!

Tiger met Tombo's glare with a pompous condescension. And made another magic sweep of the ragged stick to bless the admiral too.

The Marids who brought up the rear were too stupid to see either impropriety or humor. They planted their hoofs solidly upon the pave and marched with a wonderful drill. They would have speared a captive had ne tried to escape but beyond that their orders did not go. And so went Arif-Emir, all the way to his palace, wonderfully conceited at the enthusiasm of his citizens and slaves.

The palace guard, however, was commanded by an Ifrit named Au-Abdullah, a young fellow who wanted his way made in the world and Au-Abdullah had seen it all from afar. He rushed now from his post at the command of the palace guard, drawn up

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in formal ranks, and leaped to the step of Arif's sedan chair and pointed urgently backwards. The last of the crowd was cheering and shrieking at Tiger and Tiger benignly waved his symbols back.

Arif turned three shades bluer than indigo. He lurched up in his chair so abruptly that he overset it. He landed in the street in a tumble of cushions and bearers.

Tiger and the sailors were up instantly to dust him off. They had been chained, but all together and so could move at will. And chains or no chains, Tiger made a thorough job of rescuing Arif. He rescued Arif so well that Arif fell down three more times, got his green cloak over his head so that he could not see, got his sword between his legs so that he fell down again, stepped on his cloak so hard and with so much rage while it covered him that he almost broke his own neck. Anyone in the realm of Ramus could have told him that being rescued by Tiger was equivalent to being fed into a corn grinder and boiled in oil in the bargain.

There was a terrible furore, a surge of citizens and slaves, a rush and tangle of the palace guard and officers, blundering efforts from marids, crossed-up orders, fallen down soldiers and turmoil enough to make a small-sized battle.

And then, at last, out of the crowd came enough sensible orders from Arif to clear him from his helpers. His sword sang as it swished from its sheath, his voice cracked with rage as he bawled for the offender to come forth. The air split with the volley of his oaths and flared along the paths of his glance. He was angry. He wanted to kill a human named Tiger.

But Tiger was not there.

Tiger, with three bully-boys from the late *Graceful Jinnia*, was very thoroughly missing. Tombo was there, shivering with fear for once in his life, for he was sure he would be a substitute target for that sword. Malek was there. Seventeen humans were there. But four of the captives were gone. Their chains lay, neatly unlocked, in the pile of upset Ifrits and marids which were just now untangling themselves. The pocket of the officer in charge of the prisoners had not only been picked of keys but also of heavy coin.

ARIF-EMIR, his rage not abating, had no thought of slaying the captives at hand. He wanted the very special blood of Tiger.

"Who was the man?" howled Arif in a voice which made mortar fly out in chips from the palace wall.

"His name is Tiger," said Tombo, thrusting forward, seeing a course to be steered. "Our worst human. I'll identify him for you the moment you catch him. He's a disgrace! The indignity upon the Jinn must be avenged!"

"Produce him!" screamed Arif. "All right! Produce and identify him. We have means! There are things that can be done to repay it! We know of things! Produce him!"

Taking swift advantage of this insanity, Tombo grabbed at Malek and the two yanked loose the staples which held their chains. They promptly shouted out that they saw their quarry and went plunging off down a sidestreet which was quickly filled by a rushing torrent of marids, curious humans and a few officers.

Twenty mintes later, Tombo and Malek, who had somehow gotten lost from the main stream of pursuit, lay panting in the bottom of a lugger, covered with the empty sacks which, on the return journey from another land, would contain meal. They had boarded unnoticed by anyone on the wharves since the crew seemed to

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have gone to join the welcoming and stayed to behold an execution.

Two hours later a still raging Arif, beard stiff with flecks of foam, anger whipped now by an account of his "triumphal procession", was doubling and trebling rewards for the return of his captives. He paced furiously back and forth in his black throne room from which he ruled the independent principality of Balou, long-time rebel against the major state of Ramus.

A Jinn officer, shaking a trifle at the necessity of facing Arif, drew up and saluted. "Sire—Sire I have bad news—"

Arif faced about, eyes searing the messenger.

"Your kerchief, sire, lest you be provoked," said Au-Abdullah.

Arif flung the kerchief into the officer's face, thus giving him the right to speak without being beheaded for what he said.

"Sire," said the officer, gripping the kerchief firmly and even then backing off a trifle, out of the road of a sudden swish of Arif's blade, "I have to report that the two Ifrits saved from the *Graceful Jinnia* are also missing."

Had it not been for the kerchief, Arif would have struck but it was held before him the instant he drew back the blade. Au-Abdullah retreated a pace or two.

Arif's clenched hand trembled upon the sword grip.

"And sire," said Au-Abdullah with a rush, "I have more news."

"Speak!" roared Arif.

"The Two World Diamond, sire!"

Arif reached to his turban but reached in vain. The fabulous gem was not there. He grew gray. He shook. He staggered back and looked at the apprehensive faces of his officers.

"You know what this means," he said in a hoarse voice. "If it comes into the hands of a human slave and he knows its use—"

They had known about it longer than he but they had not dared say. And they knew what would happen if that diamond went astray. It was for the purpose of safeguarding the Two World Diamond that Ramus had gone to war with him. In his hands she had considered it unsafe and she had felt it would be too dangerous for Arif-Emir to continue in possession of it.

HE RALLIED. His anger was gone in the face of this necessity. He looked around at the tense faces of the Ifrits.

"Ransack the town. Tear it to pieces if you will. That diamond must be found! You, Au-Abdullah, close the harbor to all outgoing ships. You, Hribreh, begin to tally all slaves, examining each and all his possessions with your regiment. At all costs we must find these people! They have the diamond!" He steadied his towering bulk against a pillar for he was shaking now but with fear, not rage. "What did you remark the names of these people to be?"

"Admiral Tombo, a certain Malek and the human sailors," said an Ifrit naval officer. "There was some mention of the man named Tiger, the one who mocked you, sire."

Arif, unstable at best, began to anger again. "Have them in. If they are not in the town they are in the port. If they are not in the port and manage to escape to seaward, we will sail them down. Of Tombo, the fool, I have no qualms. He would never betray the secret of the diamond. But that Tiger—" He was beginning to work himself up again, his hands clenching and unclenching sadistically. "He'll be taught, when we get him, he'll be taught!" He flung an arm to

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them. "After him!"

But far out to sea in a certain trading craft, four human sailors stood and gazed aft where a gun had flashed red as a signal to close the port.

"Think they're shootin' at us?" said Muddy McCoy.

Tiger, his big skull aching beneath the stained bandage which covered a cutlash wound received in the fight, grunted a negative. "Closin' the port," he said. "Steer small, Wall-eye, we want what speed this hooker'll make."

Tiger sat down, finding himself a little dizzy after all the activity of the day and a loss of some blood. He took out the content of his pocket and looked at it.

"Fifty in silver and a piece of glass," he said. "I hope it's the goods."

The vessel was half-decked for the protection of cargo and to all appearances the cargo space was empty save for sacks. There had been just one lugger ready to get underweigh along the docks. And there were two very large eyes peering now from just under the aftermost sacks. They were very large, very cruel and extremely purposeful eyes. Whatever might have been said about Admiral Tombo, he seldom stopped short of any appointed goal.

"Malek!" he whispered hoarsely. The two eyes were joined by another pair, all yellow from corner to corner. "Malek, look!"

"Hweeoo," said Malek. He was an extremely pessimistic Infrit, Malek, but now and then he thought he saw hope. In such moments he did rash and stupid things. Now he had almost spoken aloud but that was remedied by Tombo's seamanlike hand across Malek's mouth. "Butsh juz-Tiger," squirmed Malek.

"It's Tiger all right," whispered Tombo. "But look!"

MALEK peered around the restraining fingers and the rays of the sunset just that moment struck splinters of light from the Two World Diamond. Malek jumped and quivered. If Tombo's hand had not remained there he would have given forth a string of startled oaths. Tombo let him quiet down and then, with a stern glare, released him.

"How'd he get it?" whispered Malek.

"However he got it's not important, you fishbrain. That he's got it is obvious. There's only one diamond on earth that big and that bright. And he didn't have one on the *Graceful Jinnia*."

"He got it when he jumped Arif-Emir!" decided Malek brightly. "He took it right out of his turban. Hah! Now we can take it home—" He would have struggled up if Tombo had not slapped him down again.

"One thing you forget," said Tombo. "Tiger's human. If he always seems to land on his feet, he's still *human*. He's a slave. He doesn't care a rap what happens to any of us important beings." Tombo thought for a moment.

"What you scowling about?" said Malek.

"I just remembered that I gave him a taste of the cat not two days ago. He's got no reason to love any Ifrit. They scaled him down from a barony when he made trouble once too often and he's going to stay a slave if I have anything to do with it."

"Let's just move up and jump them," said Malek. "I'd probably get hurt but it's all we can do."

"Jump them!" said Tombo hoarsely. "Take a look, Mr. Malek. You see that man at the wheel?" Malek did. "Well," continued Tombo, "that is Walleye, sentenced to sea service for three murders. He's a fast man with a cutlass and he's got a cutlass."

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Malek observed this. He had been a trifle confused by the fact that all four men on the poop were wearing white djelabas, cloaks used by merchant seamen in these parts to keep off the sun.

Tombo saw that Malek had collected this data. Then he continued. "The man cutting bread is Stagger O'Ryan, one of our strongest topmen. A man who can hand-over-hand up a hundred and sixty foot lift is apt to be in condition. And you observe the knife, Mr. Malek?" Malek did, on close peering, observe the bread knife.

Tombo then pointed to the seaman who was coiling sheets beyond Tiger. "And that one, if you'll recall, is Muddy McCoy who, for all his short size was the slipperiest rough and tumble man aboard. There we have three: a murderer who was fleet champion with a cutlass, a professional strong-man still agile enough to jig on a royal yard, and a dirty-fighting ex-pick-pocket who was feared by every crewman on the *Graceful Jinnia*. Now observe you, Mr. Malek—you're strong enough and bigger than they but you're stupid." Malek agreed despondently. "And observe me," said Admiral Tombo. "I have seen more active days. Any two of them could be overcome by either of us, perhaps. But you will note, Mr. Malek that they have armed themselves and we do not so much as own a toothpick."

Mr. Malek grew very despondent when he realized this. Then he rallied. "But there's the diamond!"

"True," said Tombo. "They do not know anything about the diamond or exactly what a man can do who possesses it. They do not know, probably, that it was the goal of our entire expedition and they certainly would not know what havoc they could effect with it if they wished. But I wish to call one more thing to your attention, Mr. Malek."

Malek blinked expectantly.

"The man who has the diamond is Tiger," said Tombo.

Mr. Malek heaved a very dismal sigh, wriggled backwards and gave up. "It's impossible," he agreed.

"Not entirely," said Tombo grimly. "Tiger does not know the power of that diamond. Not even I know all its power or behavior. But I know far more than he. Sooner or later they will sleep."

"We may not have a sooner or later," said Malek. "Arif-Emir will find out this vessel is gone, that it was the last one to clear port. He'll be after us fast enough and winds don't hold forever."

"That's our risk," said Tombo doggedly. And he fixed his eye on the quartette on the poop while they ate, bathed in the red light of sunset, an effect which Tombo greatly admired.

"What's the glass?" said Walleye, hanging on to the tiller with one hand and eating bread and cheese with the other.

"Steady, I guess," said Tiger absently.

"I mean the rock," said Walleye. "If it's genuine ice, we could buy us half a kingdom anyway."

MUDDY McCOY wriggled. He had serpentine movements he had to make before he could talk about anything and he made them now. There was always a sly, conspirator air about him even when he was asking for the bread to be passed. "Let me see, Tiger."

Tiger carelessly tossed him the diamond and continued to eat. Muddy looked at it critically in what daylight was left and then he reached up and put a sharp edge of it on the binnacle glass and drew down.

"Hey!" said Walleye. "Whatcha wanna do? Ruin things? Look at the scratch. Now I got to dodge it to

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read the course!"

Muddy chuckled and burbled over the diamond. "It's real all right. Feels like five or six hundred carats. If we ever get away without being caught, we can have a good time."

"Give it back to Tiger!" said O'Ryan, catching Muddy's wrist as the little pick-pocket tried to put the gem in his pocket.

Muddy chuckled uncertainly. Tiger put it absently in his pocket and went on eating bread and cheese.

"You sure are thoughtful-like," said O'Ryan. "What's the matter?"

Tiger shrugged and then grinned. He was not an extremely handsome man but when he grinned he lit up the surroundings. He yawned and lay back in the coiled sheet and looked up at the first stars. "I was just trying to think of something I felt I could remember, but that's no matter. You interested in this diamond?" He pulled it out and looked at it. His inspection was casual, then abruptly intense. He looked at it very closely.

It was a limpid stone and its many facets were almost blinding when the light struck fair upon it. But he had seen something else. Down deep in its depths, etched there by some necromancy he could not understand, he saw the *three*-dimensional Seal of Sulayman, three triangles made with only six lines. He blinked and looked again and then sat back. Tiger was not unacquainted with the two interlaced triangles which was Sulayman's ordinary seal and which had itself vast powers. He had seen the ordinary original seal knock every bolt and fastening aside which it met. But here, here was a greater mystery.

He sat up, uncoiling himself. There was a small ditty box on the deck. By rights, this seal should knock all the fastenings out of the ditty box.

"By the Seal of Sulayman," said Tiger experimentally, "I demand that every nail in this box fly out!"

Nothing happened.

Tiger looked at the diamond, shrugged and put it in his pocket again. He sank back into the sheet coil.

"What did you think would happen?" said Muddy, always a little pleased at the failures of other men.

"He's got a right," said O'Ryan.

"I'm just wondering," said Tiger. "Somebody was awful anxious to get this diamond, namely Ramus. Now that she's dead—"

"Ramus dead?" gaped O'Ryan. "Gosh, how'd you find that out?"

"He's always spoonin' up the Ifrits," said Muddy.

"If she's dead," said Tiger, unperturbed, "that means that there's a throne vacant."

"Hey!" said O'Ryan. "You mean you think maybe this diamond is a talisman, huh? Maybe it's got power. Hey, Tiger! You'd make a swell emperor. Hey, how about it, you jokers. Wouldn't he make a swell emperor?"

"He'd get us all in trouble in five minutes," said Muddy.

"You shut up!" said O'Ryan. "I say he'd make a swell emperor!"

"He may have been quiet enough the last year or two but he always gets in trouble," said Muddy. "I say he'd get us all killed!"

"Come on, come on," said Walleye. "The sun's down and that's the end of my trick. Is somebody goin' to take this wheel or do I just let it go."

"Your watch, Muddy," said Tiger.

Muddy growled, wriggled, whined something under his breath and took the wheel.

Tiger shrugged down into the coiled sheet. "Steer small. And call me for breakfast."

Walleye and Stagger grinned and stretched out on the planks. Muddy's beady eye roamed between the luff-

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ing of the mainsail head, against the brilliant stars, the compass and, now and then, over Tiger's sleeping form. The glitter of greed was strong in his gaze.

It grew darker as the twilight faded out. The wind held. The night slid through. Tombo, when the watches had changed twice, slid aft toward the poop. Walleye was once more at the wheel and his sight, at best, was poor. Tombo slid a cautious hand over Tiger's form, gently feeling for the diamond. He examined him well and then, baffled, drew away. None had approached Tiger, he knew that, for he had watched the night through. And yet the diamond was not on Tiger's person, that he knew.

Baffled, Tombo withdrew to the cargo space and covered himself with sacks. He whispered the news to Malek.

"I knew we'd fail," said Malek.

"You may know that," said Tombo, "but I don't. All I know is that the diamond has never before been in human hands. It becomes part of the soul, you know."

Malek blinked.

"It's gone now for Tiger sleeps," said Malek. "It will be here when he wakes. We'll have to plan for that. Go to sleep."

CHAPTER IV

IN SEATTLE, Washington, Jan Palmer wended his timorous way through traffic, enroute to a ship christening. He did not like the idea. He did not like the crowds which would be there. He did not like the directors of Bering Steamship with whom he would have to talk. And he did not, in short, like anything faintly approximating a ship christening if it caused him to consort with humanity.

Dimly, as he drove, feelings like false recollection seemed to tell him that his return to utter self-consciousness was a new thing, a thing which would pass as it had before. But he was not sure how it had passed before. He was sure, from the way the people addressed him, that they were quite surprised to discover him shy. He felt that, even recently, he had been very bold. But he had no proof of it. He was, in short, in something of a muddle. And he had no idea of how serious that muddle could become.

With no recollection of his dual nature, with no distinct awareness that he was elsewhere one, Tiger, a redoubtable opponent for any man, Jan could but run on the computation now that he was but Jan, a shy if unwillingly powerful shipping magnate, as they say in TIME.

The skeletalized world which was Dodd Shipyards, where crane and scaffold and beam presented a disorderly hodge-podge to all who did not understand the intricacies of assembling vessels, at length enfolded him and his roadster and he alighted into the inevitable shipyard mud to the tune of the inevitable riveters and the flash of the burning torches.

His disorganized condition of mind at the thought of meeting people caused him to park on the wrong side of the administration building whereas a goodly assemblage was especially congregated at the front entrance to meet him.

There was some confusion in the ensuing half hour wherein Jan joined the crowd to wait for himself to arrive, and waited very patiently until he discovered that it was his arrival which was expected when patience fled and anxiety came on him in floods. Conversing with so many people was entirely beyond him, he felt, and the realization, suddenly, that he was expected to make a speech

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at the christening entirely unbolted him.

Somehow, despite such minor affairs as Mrs. Chewenson's getting paint on her gown—it was she who was to break the champagne bottle, the loss of the bottle itself, the points of etiquette which a retired naval commander insisted upon or corrected and a small boy—one of the Chewenson children—almost falling a hundred feet down into the dock from the dedication platform, the christening proceeded. The ship was Bering Steam's newest fleet unit, an especially constructed vessel for the northernmost runs for which was needed an icebreaker bow. She was being named after Zachariah P. Palmer, one of Jan's more respectable ancestors whose shrewd cheating on the China coast in old clipper days had earned him a name as a great man and had laid the foundations of the Palmer fortune. Another small hitch almost occurred when the ribbons of the champagne bottle became tangled up in Mrs. Chewenson's bracelets but it was solved when the retired naval commander, with some presence of mind, wrenched it free and sent it after the vessel, already sliding down the ways. The icebreaker bow and the champagne bottle connected with a satisfactory smack and then the ribbon wound bottle, swinging back on the line which suspended it above the platform showered everyone with apple cider and carbonation. The Chewenson boy was again saved from falling off the platform into the dock, the *Zachariah P. Palmer* missed a ferry boat which had uppishly cruised astern of her ways and the party retired. It was, all in all, a highly satisfactory, extraordinarily average christening. None marked that Mrs. Chewenson had utterly forgotten to say that she christened the ship anything, no slightest originality was to be found in any of the speeches made and the whole thing, in short, was strictly in the tradition.

EVERYONE went off to make a party of it and Jan found himself, at length, alone on the platform, somewhat stained with apple cider but at least feeling able to breathe. But the whole thing had unnerved him and his fingers, as he put a cigarette in his mouth, visibly shook. He reached into his trousers pocket for a lighter and for some seconds stood there running his thumb across what he supposed was a lighter wheel but which was, in fact, a diamond of many score carats. When he discovered that his cigarette wasn't getting lighted he looked to see why. The flash of the stone nearly blinded him. Even in this murky sunlight it was comparable to the *zzzzt* of a welding rod.

He hurriedly put the stone back, sure that somebody would think he had stolen it. But the riggers were far away and he was alone on a high platform above the vacant ways. He stole another look at the stone. It flashed as bright as before. A thing as close as this to pure light seemed to howl aloud its presence. He stabbed the stone back into his pocket and stood there, looking blankly at the splinters of bottle on the platform. He thought this thing out from several different directions. Each time he arrived at the fact that he could not possibly have come by this stone. But there it lay, cool in his hot, pocketed hand. Then he considered the matter from another angle. The stone was not a diamond but paste. He knelt, took up a piece of champagne bottle, wiped some of the cider from it and, then, looking about to see that he did not appear to be observed, ran the edge of the diamond across the glass. The splinter of bot-

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tle fell into two halves. Hastily, Jan put the diamond back into his pocket. He felt chilly. Suddenly he realized that the value of the stone must range into the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions. And anything as valuable as that must have been missed. Further, when one was known to possess such a stone, he was not entirely safe from being blackjacked, knifed, drugged, beaten or just plain murdered. The shot of this realization received instant reaction from Jan.

"Good lord! I wish I was somebody else!"

There was a strange, swishing feeling. The world spun giddily. And Jan Palmer, who thought he was high enough off ground when standing on the platform, found himself clinging to a boom tower, his hands engaged in cable splicing.

He ran a piece of cable in his finger, slipped on the tower, sagged against his safety belt and looked down two hundred feet at the pygmies in the yard. The wind of high altitude fanned him. The *Zachariah P. Palmer* was a toy being towed by a toy tug into a slip. A loneliness came to him. And acrophobia nauseated him.

He ripped his eyes from the earth below. He looked at the ledge on the tower and saw that his hands were big, broad tools built for skilled but hard labor. He glanced at his clothing. The glance also took in some ground and he hastily looked up. But he had observed that he was dressed in leather and O.D. wool, not in a business suit.

Thoroughly dazed now by the realization that he did not look like and was not dressed like Jan Palmer, he again almost let go, the safety strap alone supporting him. Empty air was under his feet, two hundred feet thick.

For some time he remained where he was, afraid to stir, but when he found that he did not instantly fall, he discovered courage enough to look below again. And he saw the platform under him, a hundred feet below. Murky Seattle sunlight glinted from the chips of broken bottle. Coils of smoke came off the timbers where the *Zachariah P. Palmer* had slid down. And on the platform stood a man who, even from this height, was unmistakably Jan Palmer. He wore Jan Palmer's business suit, his hat and his shoes, he had the build and, as far as one could tell, the height of Jan Palmer. But it was obviously not Jan Palmer, as Jan up the pole hurriedly assured himself, because Jan Palmer was up *here* dressed in leather and O. D., belted and kitted like a high rigger; yes and with the hands and muscles of a high rigger even if he did not have a high rigger's insolence about altitude.

The man on the platform below, evidently, was not without his own qualms. He looked up the boom tower and frowned. He looked down at the ground and the ways, still undecided. He looked at his hands and felt the texture of the expensive suit and then, rummaging through his pockets, drew out the diamond and stared at it.

INSTANTLY Jan was alert, immediately some of his fright vanished. He had considerable wit and he knew considerable lore. He had studied something of Arabianology, he had some inklings about magic and demonology. And the instant the murky sunlight flashed from that diamond he became entirely certain that it had a vital role in this sudden shift of identity. It was not a difficult line of reasoning for the diamond, appearing so suddenly in his life, was the only strange factor in the equation. Just what it had to do with this, Jan did not know or stop to compute at

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this time. Instead he hastily grabbed for his safety belt and—with some amazement as to his strength—swung himself down the spikes toward the ground. Two or three times he almost missed a step but somehow this unusual body of his knew better than to miss and with an automatic gesture he each time saved himself.

In a short space of time he was on the ground. Clanking because of the tools belted around him, he started for the launching platform. A bulk abruptly loomed before him.

"Murphy! What the hell are you doing off the job? Get back up there!"

Jan looked at the foreman. He started to say, "I beg your pardon sir, cut—" and he said, "Dry up, Donovan! You want a spanner around your neck?"

Donovan stepped back and Jan, much amazed at his own tone of voice, hastened on.

The man dressed in Jan's clothes was coming down the steps as Jan reached the bottom. Jan looked up, the man looked down.

"I'll trouble you for that piece of ice," said Jan truculently.

"I beg pardon?" said the man who looked like Jan.

"The rock," said Jan. He was making an effort to be polite and proper but the wrong words kept coming out. "The glass, dummy. Fork it over before I beat your skull in!"

The man hastily backed up the steps. He seemed confused. In his turn he was trying to be tough and he was getting, "I beg pardon. Excuse me, I didn't understand you."

"You'll understand all right," snarled Jan, swarming up the steps.

The man turned and fled to the top. Jan was one jump behind him. He grabbed the fellow by the collar and shook him so hard he lifted him clean off the boards. Thus dazing his captive, Jan thrust his hand into the fellow's pocket and grasped the diamond. The second he had it, he shoved the man aside. Jan looked at the stone. He tried to think back. He knew this must have to do with some incantation. He tried to think of incantations.

He peered more closely into the diamond, thinking hard. The fellow grabbed at him and he knocked him back again. Jan cast his wits back across the moments he had last been Jan. What had he said?

The foreman was coming to the bottom of the steps. Jan looked at him down there, thinking the while. The fellow in Jan's clothes made another attack and Jan grabbed him automatically by the collar and held him up in the air where he struggled and wheezed.

"Hey, drop that!" bawled the foreman. "Hey, Murphy, you ape! That's Palmer of Bering Steam! Let him go!"

At that instant, gazing abstractedly at the foreman, Jan recalled what he had said. "Good lord," he whispered, "I wish I was somebody else!"

There was a blur and a swish, a feeling of emptiness and then solidity. And he was at the bottom of the steps looking up at a high rigger shaking a man who looked like Jan Palmer.

IT TOOK him a moment to recover himself. Then he understood what had happened. He had said the right words all right. But he had been looking at the wrong man. The foreman had become the high rigger, the high rigger was Jan and Jan was the foreman! And here he was down at the bottom of the steps, rigged out in a burly body, chewing tobacco and wearing stained suspenders looking up while, evidently, a high rigger wondered why he was holding the

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head of Bering Steam by the collar.

In a fright for fear he would lose his own identity utterly with this shuffling, Jan started up the steps on the run. And then he felt calmer, tougher than was his wont. In fact, he felt like he could lick this high rigger Murphy without any trouble whatever. And with that feeling returned some of his wits. It was strange to feel bossy and competent, very strange. But he did. And he felt coldly calculating and somehow knew that as the foreman he could play a very hard game of poker.

He arrived at the top of the steps. The man who looked like the high rigger was trying to focus his eyes on the man who looked like the foreman—the real Jan.

With an abrupt insight, Jan saw it would not do to wish himself back into himself and leave, thereby, the rigger in the foreman's form and the foreman in the rigger's form. This cold calculation was something new. But he could use it.

"See here, Murphy," said Jan. "You can't do this! What's that you've got in your hand?"

The foreman as the high-rigger looked stupidly at the diamond. Jan reached out and took it. "Stand back now," he said. "Leave Mr. Palmer alone."

Jan extended the diamond back toward the "high-rigger". "Here, take it!"

The high-rigger reached toward the diamond, agape with amazement, for he had not yet divined how he, a foreman, came to be Murphy, a high-rigger. "Good lord," said Jan, "I wish I was Murphy."

There was a whir, a nothingness, a blur and solidity. He found himself back being Murphy. He had his hand outstretched and was just then grasping the diamond. He took it.

"What the hell!" shrieked the foreman, now again himself. "What's going on?"

The man who looked like Jan, actually the high-rigger Murphy, was ready to bust somebody in the eye. Jan extended the stone toward him. "I think this is yours, sir," he said. Dully, Murphy made a grab at the bright stone, his outrage gathering momentum. "Good lord," said Jan hastily, "I wish I was Palmer!"

A whir, a whirl, solidity. As himself, Jan Palmer, he hastily grasped the diamond. He pocketed it.

"What the devil!" screamed the foreman. "I must be drunk! I could have swore—"

"You could have swore!" said Murphy. "One minute I'm up a pole. The next I'm somebody else! What—"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said Jan, marshaling up all his nerve for the occasion. "I am sure there has been some mistake."

"Mistake!" howled Murphy. "I—"

"Shut up!" said the foreman. "Are you all right, Mr. Palmer?"

"Quite all right," said Jan feebly. And gripping the diamond hard in his pocket he made his way past the foreman, who was trying to dust him off, went down the steps and took his way past riveters and over mud to his car.

He sat behind the wheel for some time, nervously disorganized. He had the odd sensation of not quite fitting in himself as though he had somehow been stretched like a sweater tried on by too big a man.

At length, seeing that he was in an L of the building and could not be observed, he took out the diamond and looked at it. Vague memories were trying to stir within him, a feeling that he had been lately otherwise than he was. The nearest he came to anything was when he closed his eyes and had a picture of a Tiger before him but it meant nothing. Of the

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world of sleep he now had no clue and, having none, he had only his knowledge of Arabianology bequeathed to him by his father's cousin, Greg Palmer, the only relative for whom he had ever had any respect.

HE PEERED cautiously at the diamond with the air of one who has no confidence that what he handles is not a hand grenade. He looked carefully around him and gazed once more at the diamond. And then he saw it, the three dimensional seal deep within its depths.

Instantly he recalled the two-dimensional Seal of Sulayman and the copper jar. He recalled the death of one Frobish at the hands of the Jinn which had escaped from that jar after Frobish had opened it. He recalled his own incarceration, the swindles of Green—

What a curious blank! he told himself. The Jinn, the jail, his nearness to being executed for Frobish's death because Green wanted Bering Steam for his own, the help of Alice, his wife, then his secretary. But what had happened in between? Ah, now it was coming back to him a trifle. He had experienced a period of great strength and power in this world, a joy of life and a self-confidence which had never before been his. Ah, yes. There was something else, somebody else. He had gone somewhere when he slept. Or had he only dreamed? But no, he had changed. He was somebody else somewhere else, that he knew. And something had been but lately struck from his life. Wait, it was almost on his tongue. A curse—the Jinn from the bottle—The Curse of Eternal Wakefulness! Now he was getting somewhere. A curse had kept him awake somewhere, somehow. The Jinn had cursed him to eternal wakefulness and being cursed he had then, when he slept, awakened— But here he was stuck again. Where had he awakened? Only day before yesterday he had felt powerful. Now he felt weak. Something had happened.

Whatever might have been Jan's drawbacks in the field of action he at least could think. And he was thinking now with swiftness and accuracy. Something had happened to him day before yesterday, today he woke up without any feeling of power but with a diamond.

When he had occupied the body of the high rigger he had felt strong. When he had been in the body of the foreman he had felt cold and calculating and possessed of much brass. Now, as Jan again, he felt self-conscious— This definitely had something to do with being asleep and awake and it had much to do with this diamond.

Who was he where? He was somebody else somewhere, that was certain.

Again he looked at the diamond, pocketed it and drove toward home. He wanted no taste of the office. He wanted to sit down in his study and ponder this thing out. But as he drove his wits kept turning.

Obviously this diamond was an other-world item. There was another world. Where it was and why it was had something to do with sleep. This diamond might or might not have something to do with sleep. But it certainly had something to do with throwing identity.

CAREFULLY he plotted it. One could desire or command himself into another body whenever he possessed this diamond and the owner of the other body transferred into his. By expressed desires, one could possibly go on chain fashion through the whole human race, scrambling up the identity of everyone with whom he transferred. *But* it was vital to keep

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the diamond. The diamond stayed in the hands of the person one was quitting. What changed? he asked himself. Evidently, the soul.

He scarcely realized that he was home, so abstracted was he when he drove into the drive of the old Palmer mansion. Although it was now his he followed his boyhood habits about it. He let himself in the back and went down into his study where the bric-a-brac collected by generations of seafaring Palmers gathered dust and the criticism of Alice.

He set himself at the desk, placed the diamond before him and prepared to study it further. But an unaccountable drowsiness stole over him. The copper jar, source of so much dismay earlier in his life, stood empty in the corner, its lead stopper fallen to one side.

Alice, his wife, entered. She had heard his car enter the garage and she knew she might find him here. She intended to make him go over the household accounts with her and demand an increase in her expense allowance for, romantic as she might have been as a secretary she was, after all, a woman. He was too preoccupied to answer her, she thought. She was about to become impatient when her eye caught the glint of the diamond. She gasped.

Jan was leaning back, eyes closed. She supposed he slept. She came closer and peered at the diamond. Gingerly she pushed it with her finger. Gathering courage she picked it up.

She softened. Dear, dear Jan. Always so thoughtful. But this stone was far, far too expensive for her birthday next week. But he was a dear to think of it. It was too showy, besides.

There was the ringing of a bell upstairs and she suddenly recalled that Amy Farlan was coming over that afternoon for tea and a chat about the girls. Alice took a look at Jan. He was either asleep or too deep in thought to notice. It would not do any harm to go up and show Amy. Of course Jan would have to take it back for a less expensive gift but still, it would give the girls quite a twitter.

She took it upstairs and showed Amy who cattily agreed that it was far too showy, who became class (synonym for money) conscious and began to talk about her ancestors and the Mayflower and one thing led to another and the diamond, thrust into Alice's pocket, was soon forgotten in the more interesting details of Gertrude's wearing last year's hat to Church last Sunday.

Jan, unaware either of this fascinatingly intelligent conversation in progress upstairs or the absence of the diamond dozed on, not asleep, not awake. Alice, who had a theater appointment with some friends, had Jan's dinner sent down and took herself away. And at length came home to bed. In his study, Jan slept deeply, sprawled out of his desk. The diamond lay in the pocket of Alice's frock tossed carelessly across the foot of Alice's bed.

CHAPTER V

THE SEA was blue and the waves were white and the little lugger plunged through the brightness of the morning sun, heading outward from the coasts of Balou.

"What's on your mind, Tiger?" said Walleye. "You been sittin' there lookin' stunned for about twenty minutes."

Tiger didn't answer. He sat on the rail. He had been going through his pockets from time to time and now he was convinced at last that the diamond was gone. He had now fixed an eye upon Muddy McCoy and the eye was not pleasant to encounter.

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Walleye gave her a couple spokes down and glanced back at Tiger. Then Walleye followed Tiger's gaze and, being a man much accomplished in looting, suddenly read the tale. His face grew very stiff.

Muddy McCoy was whetting his knife, oblivious of these gazes. He was humming an obscene and serpentine ditty and wriggling to the tune of it. Ryan, who had been setting all taut forward, drifted aft at this moment, saw the tension in Walleye's face, glanced to see what Tiger was looking at and then regarded Muddy McCoy.

Ryan stopped as he reached the poop deck. "The diamond or the money or both?" said Ryan.

"The diamond," said Tiger and moved quietly toward Muddy.

Walleye gave his attention to the wheel. Ryan drew a cutlass from the stand at the rail and tested its edge. Muddy, suddenly aware, looked up, took all in with a glance, sprang back and writhed into a defensive posture, his knife juggled in his palm, shifty gaze flicking from Tiger to Ryan but giving Tiger most of the attention.

"I didn't do nothing!" cried Muddy, a thousand guilts twisting in him.

Walleye spared a glance from his steering, looked at Muddy. Everyone hated Muddy because Muddy hated everyone. Walleye wondered disinterestedly if the sharks would get a bellyache if they ate the corpse after Ryan and Tiger had finished. He was about to decide that the sharks wouldn't because they would not be able to stomach Muddy's unwashedness when he spotted something which, in this by-play, had gone unnoticed. There were three sail to windward and they had their courses set for the lugger. They might be coming to get them or they might merely be on course for Balou Bay now twelve hours sail astern.

Muddy went up on the rail, shivering with fright. "I'll jump!" he screamed, his knife hand shaking.

Tiger reached out. Muddy's knife flicked, missed and went sailing amidships as Tiger's huge hand knocked his wrist. Tiger swept Muddy down to the deck and held him easily, going over him with care.

Ryan repeated the search.

"Must've swallowed it," said Ryan.

"Would've choked him," said Tiger.

"I'll kill myself! I'll kill myself!" shrieked Muddy irrationally.

"Ought to cut him open for precaution," said Ryan practically, raising his cutlass.

"I'll save you the trouble, lads," said a calm voice from the deck below.

TIGER and Ryan whipped to stare in that direction. Unseen by Walleye, Tombo stood, legs braced against the lift of the lugger. He had a pistol in each hand and the pistols, Ifrit-size, were cocked. Behind Tombo stood Malek, armed with two more cocked pistols, the remaining store of firearms on the lugger.

"Drop your knives to the deck," said Tombo.

Tiger and Ryan dropped their knives and stood up.

"Hey!" said Walleye. "What's goin' on? You better look at them sails out there. They ain't goin' to Balou. They just changed course for us!"

"Now," said Tombo, his big fangs shining brightly, "you can give me the Two World Diamond. If we have no trouble, you will be permitted to live to sail us home."

Tiger raised an eyebrow. All Ifrits, if powerful, were not quite bright at times. The entire proceedings about Muddy had been entirely misunderstood by Tombo or not understood at all. As humans the sailors had not needed to communicate as bluntly as Tombo's mind would have required.

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"My dear admiral," said Tiger, "I have just searched our shipmate here for the stone and he doesn't have it. Walleye may have it, Ryan may have it, but I confounded well don't. It was in my pocket last night when I slept. It's not there now."

"Do I change course?" said Walleye anxiously, eyes all for the three sails which were now bearing down so close that the bones in their teeth were visible.

Tiger looked up, saw the three vessels for the first time, read them and turned to the sheets. "Stand by. Let her off the starboard six points! Watch yourself, admiral." Tiger let the sheet run, the ship turning and the wind drawing aft. When he and Ryan had slacked off and secured both sails and they were picking up speed with the wind on their port quarter, Tiger looked fixedly at the ships. A gun in the bow of the foremost spoke and a ball skipped through the waves and plunked short of them. The report was dull against them.

Tombo looked to this new concern. He glanced at his guns. He was still holding them on his quarry but he had been ignored with such purpose that he could find no grounds to complain of it. He was not an overly bright individual, even amongst Ifrits, a fact attested by his having risen to the rank of admiral. But bright or not, even Tombo could not miss the flag which fluttered from the truck of the foremost ship. It was blood red—it meant "No quarter" and it meant piracy. Things were happening a trifle too fast for him.

The course change had slowed them but now they were picking up knots. But they were not picking up enough of them. They were square rigged, the three oncoming ships and although a lugger points better and sails faster into the wind, it cannot match the sailing qualities of square rig, designed to reach and run.

Malek sighed. The sun had been behind these oncoming ships and so they had gained upon them unseen. But Malek was confirmed in his pessimism. "I knew we'd never make it," he said mournfully, and shoved his pistols, uncocked, in his sash.

Tiger watched a second shot bounce toward them. He puckered his brow. He looked at their wake. He looked at the foremost vessel.

"Starboard your helm," said Tiger. "Bring her up into the wind." He and Ryan slacked off the sheets and the lugger, thus headed, was soon slatting her way to a halt.

The strangers came around in a wide sweep and with slacked braces idled in to trumpet distance.

A huge human in a red shirt stepped into the rigging of the largest ship and aimed a brass trumpet at them.

"Come aboard!"

"Send a boat!" Tiger yelled back.

THE HUMAN in the red shirt played an eye over the lugger, discovered that it did lack a boat and so, with a volley of orders, got a cutter into the sea. Manned by humans, the cutter was soon under the counter of the lugger which, slopping off, now lay in the trough, booms trembled as the canvas thundered.

Tiger gave them a ladder and shortly a bow-legged, toothless, sun-stained man dropped over the rail, glared around and then confronted Tiger

"What's your cargo?"

"Empty sacks and two Ifrits," said Tiger. "We're just out of Balou Bay and I wouldn't be surprised if men-o-war weren't far behind."

"You steal this?" said the boarding officer.

Tiger grinned.

"Well, that's one point in your favor!" He went to the rail and yelled

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down and the boat's crew, all but one, swarmed up.

The bow-legged one's grin grew wry when he looked at the two Ifrits. "Over you go." He turned to Tiger. "I'm prize crew. You'll join Old Thunderguts on the flag. Can't say what he'll do with you. Wouldn't advise trying to escape by rowing. The bows been achin' for some target work. On your way now. Lively. Now lads, step lively." And he ignored the captives and began to assign his prize crew to watches and stations aboard the lugger.

Tiger and the rest dropped into the boat and were soon alongside the flagship which was proclaimed to be, by smeary letters across the stern, obliterating an old name, *Terror*. They swarmed up the Jacob's ladder and stood in the waist, giving a hand while the cutter was swung aboard, all but Tombo and Malek who stood apart, disdainful.

The ship was entirely a hurraw's nest. Refuse filthied her waterways, grease and dirt bestained her decks. Crowded by a verminous rabble who showed every sign of debauchery, the *Terror* might better have been named the *Horror* for so she would have appeared to any seamanlike eye. Her rigging was askew so that her masts raked differently. Her halyards were chafed. Her blocks were rusted. She was a seagoing spitkit and would have been a disgrace to an army transport service.

The cutter stowed Tiger and company, surrounded by the idly curious crowd, and were thrust aft to the quarterdeck.

Tiger had supposed that he would be greeted by the red-shirted man who had hailed him from the shrouds. And he was not at all prepared to find a man in a gold crown, blowzy drunk, swathed in a silk robe and seated on an improvised throne.

A sailor went up and bowed before this creature. "Your Majesty, prisoners await your will."

Tiger blinked. There was a guard of men here on the quarterdeck which had cocked pistols in their sashes and carried drawn cutlasses in their hands. They were not neat and they were not sober but they looked businesslike. These were different than the crew at large. They seemed to be a guard around this preposterous throne.

The man in the red-shirt was giving orders to get underweigh again and seemed to have nothing to do with the enthroned individual.

The man on the throne looked up, fixed a sullen and vengeful eye upon his captives and said, "I, the Thunderbolt, pronounce the sentence of death."

The guard moved forward toward the captives.

"That," said Tiger, "would be a waste of good money. We can furnish a ransom of three hundred thousand pieces of gold!"

TOMBO, Malek, Muddy and Walleye looked with amazement on Tiger. But Tiger stayed very cool. Ryan grinned.

The guard stopped its forward motion. It drew back.

"Three hundred thousand pieces of gold for the lot of us," said Tiger, more loudly.

"There's two Ifrits," muttered somebody in the crowd behind them.

"Ought to be killed," said somebody else.

"Damned navy sons," said somebody else.

"How much?" said the red-shirted man, orders to the ship forgotten and facing Tiger now.

"Three hundred thousand pieces of gold," said Tiger, even more loudly.

"You heard my orders," said the

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Thunderbolt on his throne and took a swig from a gin bottle.

But the guard turned back to him. There was a great deal of whispered argument. The man in the red shirt finally detached himself and came over to Tiger.

"How do we collect this?" he said.

"By landing us on the beach near Ramus," said Tiger. "One messenger, the gold back in one hour."

"How does a human come to have gold?" said the red-shirted man.

"Because these two Ifrits are my captives," said Tiger. "One is very rich." He laid a seemingly affectionate hand on Tombo's lofty shoulder. "He owes me his life. He will pay."

Tombo was too stunned to object. He did not have three hundred pieces of gold that he knew about.

There was further conference.

"Kill the sailors and save the Ifrits," announced the Thunderbolt.

"Wouldn't do," said Tiger boldly. A knife had appeared in his hand as though by materialization and the knife had its point at Tombo's throat. "Put us all in the same hold or your golden goose ceases to exist."

Tombo was very upset. He was becoming extremely confused. Malek sighed pessimistically.

There was another conference. There were gestures. Thunderbolt finally laid about him with the gin bottle and rose up. "All right, you swabs. Put him in the brig. Put them all in the brig!"

And as Tiger and the rest were thrust down the ladder into the dark hold, the Thunderbolt was heard to hiccough, "You never do what I tell you. Never. But I get the next captives and I get to do it like I want!"

Tiger and his companions were locked into a space much too small and without sufficient height. The water was running along the outer skin of the ship again as the vessel gathered weigh. The water gurgled noisily in the bilge just under their feet.

Tombo sank down against the wall, a very bewildered Ifrit. "But I haven't got three hundred thousand pieces of gold, Tiger. Why did you tell them that?"

"Save your brains for admiraling, Tombo," said Tiger.

"But he'll kill us," said Malek. "These are escaped slaves turned pirate. That's Old Thunderguts himself, the most infamous rogue afloat. We're dead men."

"I'm still breathing," said Tiger and placidly pulled out a piece of cheese and a chunk of bread snatched from the lugger's stores, passed them around and began to eat lunch.

AT TWO o'clock that afternoon, the inmates of that crowded cell were confounded to find their number increased. It was very dark. The cell door had not opened. And yet there was sobbing in the cell. Whatever might have been the dispositions of these hard cases, the ability to sob was not included amongst their accomplishments. Accordingly they took a hasty census.

With many grunts and mutters, they discovered that they were now Tiger, Walleye, Muddy, Tombo, Malek, Ryan and one who sobbed. An inquiry was undertaken by all but Tiger silenced them and conducted his own.

He very swiftly located the source of the grief as coming from the one corner left vacant on their first admission to this place. He then discovered that the weeping came from a girl. He fished through his pockets and discovered flint and steel and in a moment, by a flow of sparks, beheld her. Tiger sank back on his haunches, the breath coming out of him as if he had been struck.

They had all seen the girl by the

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As though it were suddenly materialized, a knife appeared in Tiger's hand, and its point was pressed against Tombo's throat with a lightning movement.

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sparks. But Tiger had seen more. Her delicate and lovely face, seen through her veil, discovered her to be Wanna, one time temple-dancer, the fragile beauty who had become by his conquest, Tiger's consort!

Tiger got his breath back. She should have been waiting for him in Ramus, many a league away, safe in what remained of the baronial possessions which he had mostly squandered. But here she was, aboard this shabby ship, a desirable woman but a few yards away from a thoroughly blackguard crew.

"How in Baal's name did you get here?" demanded Tiger, hoarsely.

Her weeping stilled. She seemed to be listening, hopefully but fearfully, "Is—is it really you?"

"Yes," said Tiger practically, "It's me!" His male wrath was rising. "What did you do to get yourself here?"

"I don't know, I don't know," she said and began to weep again. Tiger dried her tears with a corner of his headsilk and sat down, his arm around her.

"It's my girl," he whispered menacingly to the others in the cell. "Somehow she got here from Ramus. Stand clear or I'll bust a skull!"

Muddy and Walleye scuttled back. Ryan braced up to help Tiger if there was a fight. Tombo's breathing, if anyone had noticed, had stopped on Tiger's first announcement and began again, excitement in it. Tombo scented something he could use.

"Stand and deliver," whispered Tiger to Wanna. "What happened. And stow the weeps. You'll have the guards down on us."

"Where are we?" said Wanna between sniffles.

"Aboard a scummy buckaroon," said Tiger. "Old Thunderguts."

"The Thunderbolt?" gasped Wanna. "The pirate emperor?" And she really began to cry.

"Hush it!" said Tiger fiercely. "How'd you get here?"

HE MANAGED to return to her some of her self-possession and at last she began a connected explanation.

"When I woke up this morning (sniffle) I didn't mean any harm (dabs with Tiger's headsilk) and I put on my bathing gown and started to go to the baths (two sniffles) when I felt in my pocket and there was something there (more dabs with the headsilk) and I took it out and oh! I almost went blind! (Swift recovery with no sniffles whatever). It was a diamond as big as my hand! What a stone! I almost fainted with surprise. And I looked at it and then I realized (on the verge of weeping now) that you were not there to protect me (sobs) and I ran back to our rooms and I locked myself in and almost died with fright for fear somebody had seen me look at it. It's enough (deep sobs) to get murdered to have a diamond like that. And I didn't know what to do (sniffles) and I worried and worried and I didn't know when you would be home or even where you were sailed to and I thought maybe I'd just have to stay in and starve to death (loud sniffles and a sob) for if I went out I'd get robbed and so I wanted you to come home because the diamond would have bought back our estates and then I got more and more scared for fear somebody had seen me so I hid the diamond under the mattress and all of a sudden here I was! Oh, Tiger, even if we're going to die, I'm so glad to see you!"

Tiger patted her. He was much puzzled. "Wait. You must have said something when you were hiding it."

"Oh yes. But only that I wished I was with you."

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There was a slither of leather and claws. Hoarsely Tombo said, "I'll take that diamond now."

But Tiger was already aware that it was not on her person. He confirmed his belief with a short whisper to her and her answer after a brief search about her.

"Get out of here," said Tiger to Tombo. "She don't have it. What's the matter with you, you damned Ifrit? What's so valuable about this diamond?"

Tombo weighed the situation slowly. He thought slowly, Tombo. He vocalized all his thoughts in his head. And he supposed he must be very wise to be able to think so slowly and take so long to reach conclusions. In short, he was a fool. But he had brawn and determination to put foolish conclusions into solid actions and power to spare.

Tombo was assured that the diamond was not then present. He permitted himself to be pushed back. He and Malek could easily overcome these unarmed humans, such was the disproportion of size. But Tiger might inflict damage.

"I'll wait," said Tombo. "But if the diamond comes here, it is mine."

CHAPTER VI

JAN PALMER awoke to find himself none too well oiled after a night's slumber across a desk. Some servant had brought in a tray of dinner and it was thirteen hours cold. Nevertheless he took the slab of roast beef in his hand and chewed it, poured out a cup of coffee and sipped it. The cold coffee told him that this was not evening, the slanting beams of sunlight confirmed it since his seaman's eye detected that they came from the western windows. He stood up and rang a bell. Fumbling around in his studio bathroom he located and applied the materials necessary to make his cheeks smooth like in the ads. The Swede girl made the coffee hot and presently, seated again at his desk and much refreshed by the brew, he thought about the diamond.

So certain was he that it was lying there, right in front of him, where its glitter had mesmerized him yesterday, that it took him several minutes to digest the fact that it was *not* present. He immediately began a scramble through the stacks of papers and sail plans and when nothing resulted from this, looked under and around the desk, into the waste basket and around the office.

He summoned the Swede girl. Yes, she vas brought his supper to him the night before. No she vas not seeing a diamond. And if he vas accusing her of being a thief he vas going to get a notice and soon right away. He mollified her and was about to start his search all over again when Alice appeared.

Alice was a very businesslike girl. She had no traffic with idleness. A man, particularly the head of Bering Steam, should toe the mark, measure up, bear down and generally comport himself. Neither he nor she was aware of the fact that she had had no complaints a very few days ago. Something poetic had vanished from her nature, something strong from his. She was a hard-eyed ex-business woman who had gotten her man and, having gotten him, was making very sure that he did all the business necessary, not only for the money involved but also because she had a lifetime habit of keeping a man at his job.

"You aren't at the office," she said. "It's nine."

"Yes, dear," said Jan, meekly.

"The moment you take your hands off the reins your board of directors is liable to take a slice of Bering for themselves."

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"Yes, dear."

"Now that we have that settled, I'll run you down. I'm going shopping for the tea party this afternoon."

"Alice," said Jan, stopping her as she turned toward the door, "have you seen anything of—well, of a diamond?"

"Oh, yes of course you silly boy. It is a nice present but it is simply too expensive what with the government and its silly taxes and all. You'll have barely enough cash to pay your income tax as it is, despite the fact that they are letting you keep one half of one percent of your own money this year and only telling you how to spend two-thirds of that. So you just trot right back to the jewelry store and tell them that a much less showy present will be quite adequate."

Jan blinked at this, got it straight and with husbandly wit decided not to disabuse her of this fable she had erected. "Very well, my dear. Give me the diamond and I'll do what is right."

She looked around as though expecting to find it in the room, then poised a finger against her lower lips, looked at the ceiling and thought. Jan watched her in suspense.

"I showed it to one of the girls—let me see— Did I put it down in the drawing room? No—"

"Think, dear," said Jan, hiding his agony.

SHE WENT up to the drawing room to make sure and Jan anxiously followed her. Then she remembered that she had been wearing a gown with pockets and ran up to her bedroom. Jan swiftly sped after her. She asked her maid what had happened to the gown and the maid wanted to know what gown and Alice had to recall the specific gown and the maid wondered if it were the pink gown and Alice didn't think it was and the maid wanted to know if it had been placed right here and being possessed of the unnecessary information that it had been in that exact place said no she hadn't seen the gown and Jan in desperation went to the closet where they should have gone in the first place and it was discovered by sudden brilliant recollection on the part of the maid that it had gone to the cleaners and oh if she'd known it had been the gown on the foot of the bed she would have known right away.

This intellectual exercise was not much appreciated by Jan. He grabbed a phone and called the cleaning establishment and was told that the gown must still be on the truck which was not due back until five.

Jan raced out of the house, deaf now to the female brand of rationality, and wrapped his hands around the wheel of his roadster. He did not realize, until he had begun to drive, an occupation which stirred thought processes with him, that he was most terribly concerned about something which had appeared without warning and had disappeared in the same way. He knew there was a very good reason why he was urgent about it. He did not know the source of the nightmares he had had the night before and he did not know what would happen to him if he did not find this diamond. But he had a churning anxiety about it and he drove madly back and forth looking for a truck bearing the sign and seal of the Frazall Cleaners.

About eleven, after several calls back to the plant, he located his quarry and ransacked the truck for the dress. But search as he might through the pockets of all the gowns present, he could not find the diamond and with a sagging mind, drove wearily homeward.

Alice, bright and happy, met him at the door with the diamond in her hand. "We found it when we turned

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the mattress on my bed!" she announced.

Jan sighed with relief and asked for it.

"Not until you give me a kiss," said Alice. "There, that's a good boy." But she didn't give up the diamond. "If I were you," she said. "I—"

Whirr, zzzt!

Jan found himself in a coy position, holding the diamond, looking at his body on the other side of the doorsill. The face which belonged with his proper self blanked in astonishment and started to look down. Jan whipped a quantity of female sleeve aside from his hand, looked at the diamond and said, "Good lord, I wish I were Jan."

Zzzt! Whirr!

He was back in his own body again. Hurriedly he snatched the diamond away from Alice.

"Wha—what happened. I—I—" gasped Alice. "I—I'm sure I was you for a minute! I felt just as though—"

"Nonsense," said Jan hastily. "Delusions, delusions. Why don't you go see your dianeticist. Something restimulated, no doubt." And he rushed past her and down the steps to his study. He barred the door, he locked the windows and then he laid the diamond carefully on his blotter.

He took off his coat and threw it on the sofa. And then he squared up to his library and began to haul down armloads of books on Arabianology. Shy as he might be with men and business, Jan Palmer was very much at home with tomes. His telephone rang and he threw it in the waste-basket and stuffed a sofa pillow in on top of it and, seating himself, began to run through catalogues of talisman.

BY FOUR o'clock he had found it. He scanned the Arabian script with his muscles gradually relaxing. In the ancient copy of Ibn Mahmud's Magical Stones and Jewels of the Eastern Kingdom's, on page 872, he read:

"TWO WORLD DIAMOND. This miraculous stone, said to have been found in a meteorite near Thebes despite its blue-white quality, was etched by magical means in the workshops of Sulayman with the seal commanding the air elements, a tetrahedron which appears well within its depths. Weighing two hundred and ninety-six carats, it is reputed to be without flaw. Its mysterious qualities are remarked in a manuscript of Abdullah Sid who states that it becomes the soul companion of its possessor but attaches itself to the material being. By its means it is possible to escape from the confines of earthly flesh and wander at will but the stone remains in the possession of the body quitted. It has the power as well of translating itself from the world of the Jinn to the human kingdom when in the possession of a human. It was used by Sulayman himself for this purpose to expedite his government of the Jinn. In the hands of the Jinn much of its power fails since it was designed for human use. It has many additional powers as described by Abdullah Sid but it is primarily used by the Jinn, by whom it is said to be possessed at this time, to achieve immortality since it permits them to leave behind their dying selves and transmigrate to a younger body the soul of which is then cast into the infernal regions. It is supposed to have been stolen by one Arif, an Emir of the Jinn, from the treasury of Sulayman on the death of that monarch and has not since come to human knowledge."

Jan read it twice. The reference to the world of the Jinn stirred a definite unease in him. Confident, then, that amongst his collected books he would either find the manuscript of

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Abdullah Sid or that he would find where it could be procured, he began once more to ransack the library.

The Swede girl came with his dinner, since madame was dining out, and setting down the tray after Jan had let her in, eyed the diamond. She was somewhat huffy now that her innocence had been proven so utterly and so interested she was in that innocence that her interest in the diamond did not take form, for itself, until she was in the kitchen again. There the sly-eyed lumberjack who was her professed fiance and who had been lately kicked out of a logging camp up on the Skykomish or Snohomish or Skokomish or Snoqualimie or some equally Seattlesque name listened with some fascination to her tale of a diamond that was as big as her fist yet down in the boss's study. The sly-eyed lumberjack, who did a quantity of wriggling not only from the lice one picks up in logging camps but from a natural disinclination to stay straight or sit still, recalled that he had an appointment down at the Friends of Russia Communist International Objectors Social Hall Lumberjacks Local No. 261 and, explaining that as Chairman of the Committee for Making Dissatisfied Minorities Dissatisfied he had much propagandizing to do, took an early leave. Kissing his sweetheart, Chan Davies, the lumberjack, went wriggling down the drive, writhed out of sight and then quickly hitched himself behind the shrubs and wriggled back again.

Meanwhile Jan had located the whereabouts of the manuscript. In a list of rare and lost works he had found this line:

"Adbullah Sid, manuscripts of. Deposited in the library of Alexandria and lost when the library was burned by Julius Caesar. No other copies known to be in existence."

However Jan might swear, or vent his contempt upon the Roman upstart, as many another scholar had, the mss. of Abdullah Sid were lost. Ibn Mahmud, not being prophetic enough to know that anyone would be so thoroughly unlettered as to destroy at a whim the works of the ages, had not listed all the properties of the diamond in his description.

Jan laid the tumbled tomes aside. Baffled he looked at the diamond. What properties did it have? The suddenness of his first discoveries had unnerved him to be very experimental. He knew how thoroughly dangerous it would be to make random tests. One might wind up in the Infernal regions with no succor or he might find himself an elephant or he might, who knew, discover himself consorting—God forbid—with Ifrits!

His puzzling was so intense that he did not hear the slip of a window catch, expertly undone with a wire. He felt a small breath of air and then he turned to discover a man with the chief Communist political argument, the lead pipe, upraised in his hand. He dodged and struck out. Jan was slight of build and stature. The lead pipe came on through his defense, slammed at his head, connected and connected again. Jan fell beside his desk. The Two World Diamond was swept into his pocket and the lumberjack, who was against wealth only so long as he had none, rushed off in quivering glee, writhing all over himself at the thought of how many servants he could now keep.

Jan, inert beside the desk, groaned faintly and was still.

CHAPTER VII

IT WAS DAWN on the *Terror* but the only intelligence of it that the people in the brig had was activity in the decks above them. Tiger, stiff with having cradled Wanna's head on his arm all night, flexed himself like a big

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cat. In so doing he disturbed the others who still slept and they started to object until they found that it was Tiger who had done the disturbing at which they relapsed into sufferance.

Tombo and Malek, at the other end of the cell, eventually began to awaken and with many growls and grunts prepared to take up the day.

No guards appeared, no food appeared. In this shabby and unregulated vessel, one could not expect such a humanity as food and water. But food and water did not engross the inmates' thoughts very long. Tombo grunted into an erect posture.

"Now we'll see," he said, "if the diamond has come back." And he came forward through them toward Tiger.

In the open Tiger might have proven a physical match for an Ifrit but not here where the Jinn's arms could so quickly encircle and crush. Accordingly Tiger let his pockets be patted. He raised objections at any handling of Wanna for he had already assured himself that she did not possess it.

Tombo decided she had no pockets in her filmy garments anyway and satisfied himself by examining where she had slept. He then bumbled on to a search of the others in the cell, very watchful lest any quick passing be done by these humans.

There was a sudden yelp of amazement and the crunch of Tombo's clawed fist striking a blow. Muddy squeaked in pain and writhed back. As little light as there was, the diamond caught it and glittered as it lay in Tombo's palm.

"So you decided to try to swindle me, did you! If you foolish humans only knew the power of this stone! But I leave you to rot and die. Malek! Take my arm!"

Tombo, bending beneath the overhead, saw that Malek was in place. Then he juggled the stone around, peering at it and throwing sparks off a flint with his knuckles so that he could see the sign within the stone. Finally he was satisfied.

"To Ramus City both! Fly!" cried Tombo.

There was a rush and a spin of air, a blurred spot where they had been and a rush from Tiger.

There was a thunk upon the floor and Tiger was grasping emptiness.

Tombo and Malek were gone!

Stupefied by this vanishment, accustomed as they were to the activity and powers of the Jinn, the five humans remained motionless for some seconds. And then Tiger scrambled around on the floor and finally came up holding the diamond he had struck from Tombo's hand at the instant of departure.

"Huh!" said Tiger. "A magic stone!"

His companions pressed around him. Wanna wept disconsolately in the corner. Tiger struck flint and steel again and again, looking thoroughly at the stone.

"That sign in there has something to do with it. The way it's held!" said Tiger. "Here, everybody grab hold of everybody. Come on Wanna. If they can do it, we can!"

They formed a circle, each holding the next. Then Tiger, holding the stone cried, "To Ramus City all five! Fly!"

Nothing happened.

Resolutely, Tiger turned the stone with another side up. Again he pronounced the command. Again nothing happened.

FOR TWO hours and more they worked at it and always without success, trying different commands, trying different positions of the gem, facing it to various points of the compass.

Finally, with one last try wherein Tiger said, "Anywhere, let's GO!"

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they gave it up and sank back.

"Must work for Jinns and not for humans," said Tiger. "How'd you get this stone, Muddy?"

"I didn't steal it! I didn't do nothin' wrong. I just woke up and there it was, and I didn't do nothin' about it and I didn't know it was even on me until the admiral shook me out. Honest I—"

"Pipe down," said Tiger. "Wanna leaves it in Ramus City and it turns up back here again. Don't know why it tried Muddy! By the way, Wanna, what happened when the old lady kicked off?"

"You mean Ramus the Magnificent?" said Wanna, dutiful subject that she had been.

"I mean Ramus of the Triple-Chin," said Tiger.

"She died."

"I know," said Tiger patiently.

"That was some time back," said Wanna.

"Whatever time it was, what happened?" said Tiger.

"They kept it secret," said Wanna and then evidently decided that it was still a secret for she said nothing more.

"How'd she die?" prompted Tiger.

"Old age, some said. They kept it awfully quiet for days. And then Zongri—"

"Who?" said four voices at once in startled alarm.

"Zongri. King of the Ifrits of Barbossi Isles. The cousin of Ramus. He was at the palace when the news came and he took charge of the kingdom. And some said it was terribly lucky he was, too because there might have been a revolution or something and people killed. So he took command of the government and had himself crowned king and recalled all the navy ships that had been sent against Arif-Emir and the last morning I was there he was supposed to be making plans for a full scale attack on Arif because of some silly jewel. So it is fortunate that Zongri—"

"But Zongri!" said Ryan. "He's Tiger's worst enemy! He swore he'd see Tiger dead. He escaped from the slave camps only last March! He'll murder Tiger on sight and kill the rest of us for the fun of it!"

"That's so," said Wanna whose education was, after all, only that of a temple dancing girl. And then she began to weep.

"Not only that," said Ryan remorselessly, "but Arif-Emir will stretch us in the sun, every one and let us dance a jig on air. We just escaped him! That leaves us without a haven anywhere in the world! Whew! Am I glad we didn't take that voyage to Ramus like Tombo! This is *safe* compared to Ramus or Balou!"

"And the item over which Zongri and Arif will fight," said Tiger, not without mirth, "is right here in my hand."

"Oh, Tiger! Throw it away!" pleaded Wanna. "It's too dangerous!"

Tiger, following the Arabian adage of always listening carefully to the advice of women and then doing the exact opposite, chucked her under the chin. "Honey, if I were Old Thunderguts up on deck—"

Whirrrrrr! Zzzzzzt!

Startled and jolted and much agog even for himself, Tiger found his eyes looking forward the length of the *Terror!* He tensed up to fight for his life. The guards with their naked weapons were strolling about the quarterdeck, enjoying the morning sunlight. The makeshift throne creaked to the roll of the vessel in the smooth swell. Yellow sunlight, blue water and a dirty ship were all before his gaze. And none attacked him! He raised his hand and found out that it held a gin bottle, half empty. Come to think of it, he felt a little drunk. He glanced

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at himself and discovered that he was clothed in ermine which had raised many generations of moths. Further, he was flabby and ancient and he didn't smell good.

HE DIGESTED this. He was old Thunderguts! He took a swig at the bottle to brace himself. Then, surrounded by enemies as he was, he made his wits work swiftly—which is to say, he made Old Thunderguts' wits work as well as his own soul's. He came up with the realization that the diamond was at the bottom of this change. He recalled his last words. He looked into his hands and pockets. But the diamond was not there. Abruptly he understood that Old Thunderguts must be down in the brig possessed of Tiger's body and Tiger's strength and that Wanna was down there, too!

Tiger as Thunderbolt steadied himself and thought fast. The diamond must still be down there. By some accident this thing might get upset at any instant. Therefore he had to act swiftly.

"Guard!" he roared.

"Your Majesty!" said a buckaroon officer.

"Why are we cruising here?"

"By Your Majesty's orders, sire. We are standing on and off out of sight of land of Ramus to pick up any stray cargoes which might show and to seek opportunity to transfer our prisoners to shore for ransom. No sails in sight, sire. Your fleet is ready to hand." The officer bowed.

"I am bored!" said Tiger as Thunderbolt. "Have up the prisoners!"

The guards wandered away to do his orders and Tiger as Thunderbolt waited a little nervously for fear that something might have happened down there or that this affair might not go off. That he was nervous upset him because Tiger as Tiger was never nervous. Besides, Thunderbolt's body had lice.

In time the guards came back dragging their captives with them. The young officer in charge was much discomfited by the disappearance of the two Ifrits for he feared it would be visited upon him. But he was not at all dismayed by the bawlings of the big sailor in the yellow headsilk.

"Damn your peepers! I tell you I'm emperor!" howled Thunderguts as Tiger. "I'll roll heads for this! I'll maim and brain men for this! Leave me go!"

Tiger as Thunderbolt sat calm and bored, waiting for their nearer approach. They came at last, despite much wrestling on the part of Thunderguts as Tiger, to the foot of the throne.

"You look," said Tiger as Thunderbolt, "to be a lad of too much sense and balance to go mad. You say you're the emperor of the buckaroons?"

"Aye, blast you! I'll rip you apart! What magic is this?"

"What's that you have in your hand, guard," said Tiger as Thunderbolt.

"A diamond I took off him, sire. I mind your rule of share alike or lose a head and here it is."

Tiger as Thunderbolt gasped a little with relief to have his hands upon it again. And he was amazed that he would feel nervous at all.

"You're Tiger," said Tiger as Thunderbolt.

"I'm the emperor of the buckaroons!" shouted Thunderguts as Tiger.

"I am bored," said Tiger as Thunderbolt. "There are those aboard who suppose I am getting old. There are those aboard who would conspire and reduce me that keeps them full of rum and heavy with money. Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take you on, one knife apiece. You're a likely, brawny lad and I've every reason to suppose you're a good fighter. If I win, I'll

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have proved it. If you win, you can have my crown, understood?"

AN AMAZED crew was gathering aft to hear this. They had, in fact, lately listened to conspiracies to unseat the aging old ruffian whose desire for blood was often satisfied at their expense and without profit.

"Your name's Tiger," said Tiger as Thunderbolt. "I've heard of you. One time baron of the realm of Ramus, a hard man in a fight."

"I'm Thunderbolt!" cried Thunderbolt as Tiger.

"So you contest my throne. So we'll have at it. Lads and subjects. Do you consider Tiger a good leader. You'll have heard of him. He says he's runner up for the title. Do you agree to accept him if he wins?"

The crew was ready for any amusement, particularly a fight, particularly a way which would unsaddle them of Old Thunderguts. If the big sailor won, the guards could always finish him off if he didn't work out. The chief virtue of Old Thunderguts was that he had made such a reputation in his earlier days that he was a by-word which caused fear in merchantmen and navies. So be it.

"Yea! Hyrrah!" said the crew.

"Then clear the quarterdeck," said Tiger as Thunderbolt. "Lash the helm and pass up two knives."

Wanna, much unsettled, was weeping over Tiger's being so far out of his head as to believe himself to be a buckaroon monarch and she clung to Thunderbolt as Tiger pitifully until swept back by the guards.

"All off the quarterdeck!" said Tiger as Thunderbolt.

"Wait!" said Thunderbolt as Tiger, for his rage had cooled to a point where he realized that he would be stabbing his own body and was, in short, in a considerable mess against unknown magic.

Tiger as Thunderbolt threw his opponent a knife. The quarterdeck was cleared. And then Tiger gripped the stone and whispered, "If I was you—"

Whirrrr! Zzzzt!

Whirrr! Zzzzt!

Tiger steadied himself as Tiger and plunged ten inches of good steel into the heart of Old Thunderguts. There was no need to strike again. The buckaroon emperor pitched to the deck, the steel still in him, quivering with his death spasms. Tiger swooped over him, swept up the diamond and whisked from its sheath the overlength rapier the emperor had worn.

There was a shudder of pleasure amongst the buckaroons. But the guards had long had their own selections of who was to be the next ruler—the officer in the red shirt. With Red Shirt at their head, the guards sprang forward.

A sailor who is used to a cutlass does not much apprehend the dangers he runs against a rapier. This was one reason Old Thunderguts had so long maintained his sadistic reign. And Tiger, who had studied rapier as something a baron had to wear, knew how to use it.

He used that rapier so quickly and with so much efficiency that Red Shirt's followers, the remaining two, fell away, leaving five men very dead on the planking before Tiger. Red Shirt, however, with his rule in sight, was heedless of death and desertion. Fighting with more strength and skill, he fended with a knife in his left hand and struck hard blows with his right hand weapon, a vicious boarding pike some two feet longer than the rapier.

Tiger skipped up to the top of the after house, nimbly avoiding the thrusts of the pike. He tripped over a

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coiled sheet as he fell back. Red Shirt came up over the edge of the house. Tiger scooped up the coiled line and threw it expertly. Red Shirt, tangled pike and knife went backwards like a clawing cat. But a bigger cat slashed through. Tiger, with two quick punctures, let out Red Shirt's sinful life.

TIGER did not stay to watch the throes. He spun about and from the house looked down at the mass of buckaroons in the waist.

"Cheerily now, lads, Step up with your steel, any of you who think my orders are not worth obedience! Step up, I say."

They looked at him, already tall above them by virtue of the quarter-deck's raise and the house and tall again in his own right. His headsilk was yellow in the sun, his face was calm and determined, his seaboots were planted like they belonged there. A naked rapier was red to the hilt in his hand and the red ran. And from headsilk to boots and boots to headsilk he looked to one and all very, very much like the new emperor of the buckaroons.

They cheered him again and again, not because they had to but because they appreciated a deliverance and a victory.

The other ships swung in to find out what was happening and each of the three was told of the victory. One ship was doubtful until Old Thunderguts' head was thrown aboard it and its skipper invited to a contest. Then it too flew signal flags in celebration.

"And now," said Tiger to a crew which thought it would get a new rum issue, "you'll holystone these decks, you swabs, mend these sails, reverse these halyards and set the ordinance to rights. You're a lot of stinking pigs but I've got a strange notion to make men of you yet!"

And with Ryan and Walleye as his new officers and Wanna installed in the emperor's cabin, Tiger prowled the ship, ended disputes with a quick knock-out of disputants, cruised his fleet and ended all disputes there by trouncing one captain and smashing the head of one would-be mutineer, and generally, at a minimal cost in blood and sweat, began the building of a fighting organization. On the *Terror,* with the throne jettisoned, Tiger ate a peaceful evening meal.

"I think Tombo will be back," he said.

"Sure," said Ryan, scooping up a knifeful of split peas and then, eating them, gesturing toward the unseen land, "and I'm thinking he'll be back with twenty sail or more."

"It isn't Tombo I'm worrying about," said Tiger. "Arif-Emir may come down on us. And he'll be twice as mad. It's his diamond."

"It ain't either," said Walleye. "It's ours. Possession is ten points of the law on the high seas. I wonder if we'll ever live to make liberty on its value."

"I dunno," said Tiger. "Pass the salt horse."

CHAPTER VIII

THE DOCTOR finished binding Jan's head up. "You might have died," he said cheerfully. "An inch to the right and you'd have had a fracture of the skull. The cranium, however, is a most remarkable structure. It has inherent design, according to some engineer up at M.I.T. which resists such injuries to the maximum extent. The skull, he says, is stress-analyzed on the principle of arch supports so that there are at least seven primary arches resisting destruction in the face alone. I believe—"

Jan groaned. He was sitting in the living room where the servants had

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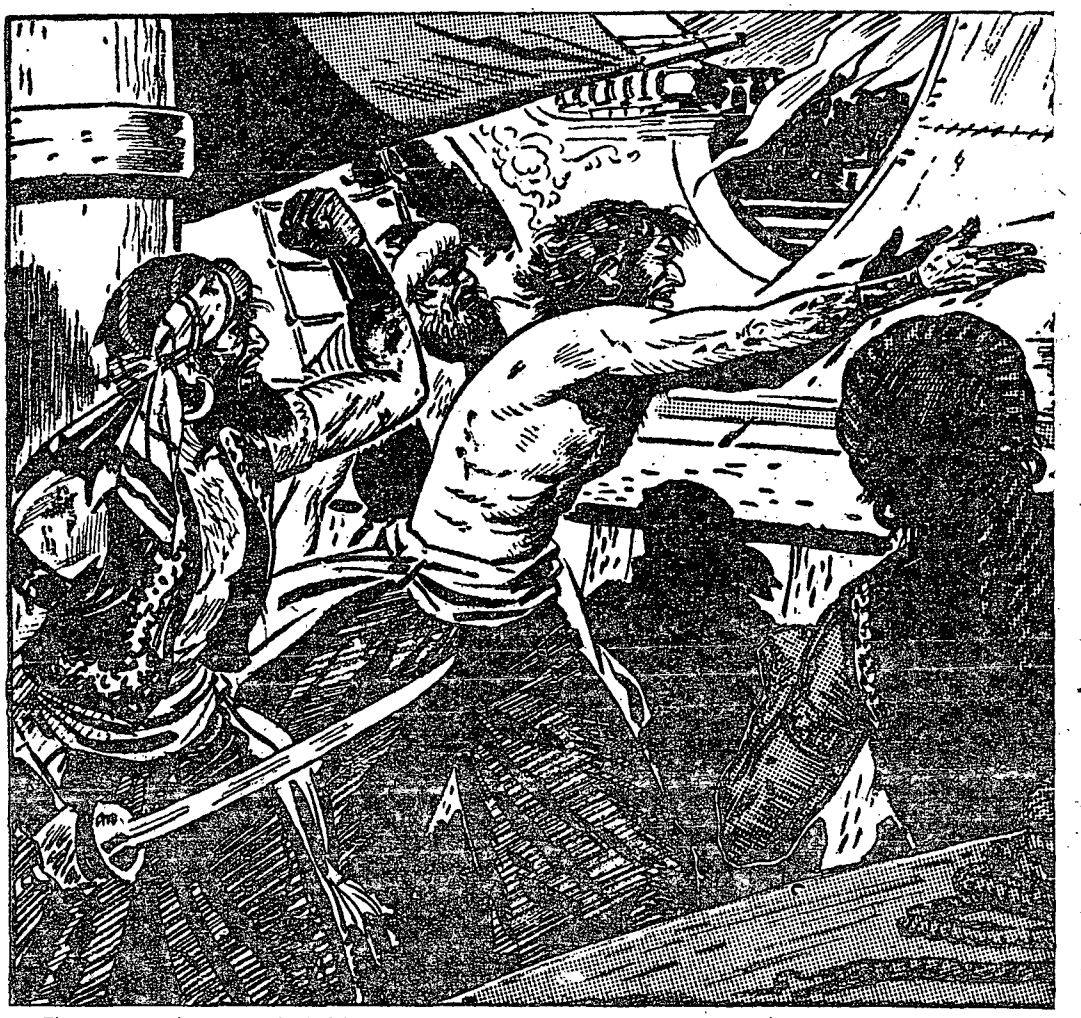

The enemy ship was doubtful about surrendering until the head of Old Thunderguts

carried him and the morning sunlight which streamed in was entirely too cheerful to fit his moods. A canary was twittering handsomely beside the yellow drapes and a jay in the branches of a tree outside was making critical comments about the canary's tone truth. The Swede girl was getting in people's way, weeping and apologizing for Jan, and in describing his assailant to the police, had discovered her liaison with the criminal to her own astonishment.

The doctor went on with his lively discussion of the resistances of the skull, completing his bandaging. Alice sat at a secretary desk making notes of invitation to a tea party and commenting sideways now and then on her amazement that Jan would lie down in his study all night without calling anyone and on her concern that he might miss out a board meeting scheduled for that afternoon.

Jan, unable to follow anyone's discourse fully and being dazed in the bargain, followed none. Instead he gloomed about his diamond. Lately, he realized, there had been a change. Alice had changed, he had changed. There was something missing but he could not know what it was. There was the matter of the diamond. Somehow, when that had appeared, life had

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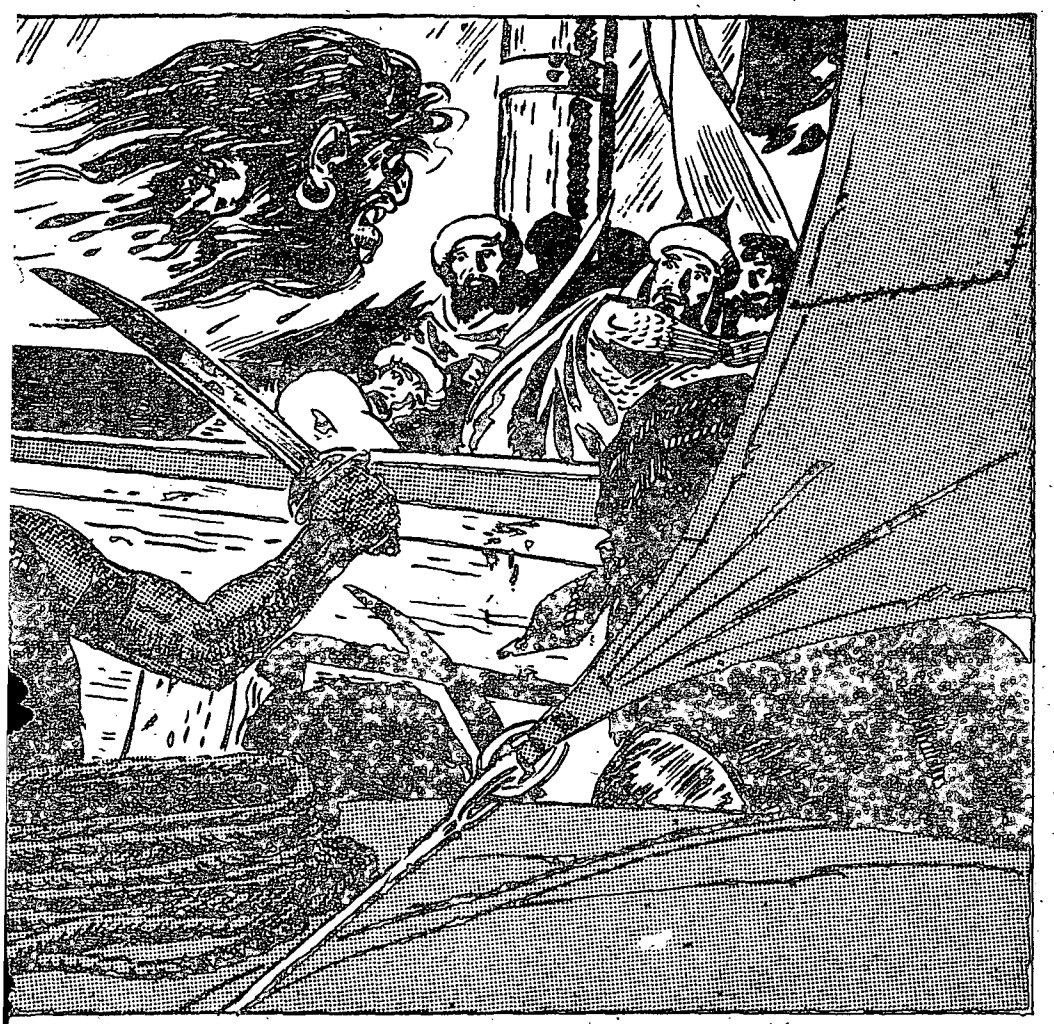

was tossed across the intervening space straight toward the startled crew...

altered. But it had not altered because of the diamond, possibly. The diamond was part of a picture. Jan wanted to know the whole picture. The diamond, he had felt, would have changed things again and for the better. But now it was gone, never, he felt, to be regained.

Alice remarked for the severalth time that after all, he did have a board meeting and he took this fact between thoughts and used it as his excuse to get away from these people.

He tottered upstairs, the Swede girl following after, wringing her fingers and hoping she was not going to be blamed. Jan closed the door to his bathroom and so separated himself from her wailing.

He shaved gingerly, nicking himself several times. The act tired him and when he came out he was unable to face the additional task of changing his pants. Besides, the Swede girl was still there. He put on a clean shirt, for the old one was stained with his blood, and squirmed into a sport coat. He staggered down the stairs, the Swede girl following him. Alice was at the bottom.

"Dear I hope you feel better," she said. But before he had a chance to

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warm to this she added: "And please mail these letters on your way to the office. It will take a load off me. I am so busy."

Jan took the letters. He was about to reply submissively when he astonished himself. "Mail your own damned letters!" he said. "What the Great Horn Spoon's the idea trying to make me run your errands? What am I, an errand boy? And as for you," he roared, turning on the Swede girl, "go down to your galley and stay there and shut up that confounded yapping! And if I ever catch you haying around with another condemned Commie I'll give you exactly what you deserve, a taste of the cat! Now!" he barked, dropping the letters and thrusting Alice aside, "get out of my way and stay out of my way."

He left and the two women promptly collapsed into one another's arms in an orgy of tears.

JAN REACHED his car and recollected himself. He was somewhat startled now that he looked back on his own conduct. He was almost remorseful when he thought of the stricken look on Alice's face. After all, she had done nothing—she had so often said so and was oh so very right. But a sterner gleam came into his eye and he drove workwards at great speed and with considerable recklessness.

He entered the Palmer Building, conscious of a headache but caring nothing about it. He swept through the outer offices of Bering Steam like an Alaskan willy-waw, leaving papers to spin and settle in his wake. He entered his office, shot all the correspondence off his desk which, of old, he slavishly signed and began to push buttons.

The board had decided the name of the lately launched ship. He himself had considered Zachariah Palmer an avaricious, selfish disgrace to the race who knew no interest that was not dollar marked. The board had blandly overridden his objections just as they had been overriding everything he said lately. He was conscious that he had known for days now that three members were jockeying Bering stock to get an advantage. With that advantage they would monopolize certain portions of Alaskan trade in such a way that freight rates would soar. In capitalistic short-termism this same group had overridden the Alaskan Highway, thinking it would injure Bering's trade traffic, overlooking the fact that you need a population to have trade and that you need fast highway transport to have a population. Jan wanted that ship named Greg Palmer after the only Palmer he had ever respected. And he wanted Bering to throw its weight behind an Alaskan Highway that was a highway, not a military miscarriage designed to favor Canadian mining interests. And he punched the buttons loud and long.

But he didn't get members of the board or vice presidents right off. He got instead a squat, square, self-assured, bad-mannered example of the under-privileged called a Union Delegate. This individual happened to be a member of the Friends of Russia Communist International Objectors Seaman's Union Local No. 530 and he dwelt under the remarkable assumption that anyone who belonged to a democracy or indulged in trade was a capitalist and that only Communists were free and he believed besides that the only way Communism could make the world free was to enslave it and the only way to do that was to set up a super-capitalism called Sovietism. But however confused might be this character's ideologies, his manner was forthright. He had just finished intimidating two Bering captains into

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thinking that the crew really commanded the ship through the Union Delegate and, having heard that young Palmer had "gone soft in the head lately"-was commenced upon a course of persuading him that the crews really commanded the company as well. This individual, by name, Simon Lucar, came in, picking his teeth, his hat on the back of his head.

Knowing well that the best defense is an attack, Lucar sought to unsettle his opponent by beginning, "We've had a lot of charges lately about racial discrimination, Palmer. People with no other nationality than 'United States' have been permitted to hold jobs on your ships! This discriminates against all the minorities! I want it stopped! I want to inform you here and now that by the terms of our contracts, our hiring hall gets to appoint all the jobs on every ship whether the men can do the work or not. You have let two men be hired as oilers just because they knew their work. Did you inquire if they were minority members? No! Did you pay them the same wages as the downtrodden minority members like the Bulgarians? Yes! This is intolerable! I—"

JAN HAD measured him up and down. "Who the hell are you?"

Lucar drew himself up. "I am the Union Delegate from the Seaman's Local No. 530. I—"

"We deal with American unions only and you know it!" said Jan. "We use you only when your dirty tactics make us short on crews. Get out!"

"You can't bully me, you—you capitalist!"

"You get out or I'll throw you out!"

"Racist!" jeered Lucar, measuring up Jan's slightness inaccurately.

There was a crash. It was Lucar going backwards through the glass door. There was another crash. That was Lucar being picked up and launched battering-ram fashion across the hall to bring up against the men's room. "I'll get you!" whined Lucar, struggling up.

"Go to hell!" said Jan.

Lucar instantly collapsed. He collapsed in a very peculiar way. He collapsed as does a man when he is dead.

Jan started to grab his collar but the pallor on the man's face told him something. His rage cooled. His temerity returned. He bent and felt for a heartbeat. There was none!

Jan began to tremble a little. The man was dead. He was not cut or badly bruised. But he was dead. Peering stenographers gathered. Somebody sent for a doctor. Somebody else sent for the police.

Jan pushed through the crowd and staggered back to his office, broken glass crunching underfoot. He leaned against the wall and reached into his pocket with a quivering hand to get his handkerchief and mop his face. But he did not contact a handkerchief. He contacted a cool something. He grabbed and hauled it forth.

The diamond!

Dizzily he went over the morning's events and the events of the night before. The diamond had been stolen. But here it was in his pocket! It must have been in his pocket all morning! Big as it was he had not realized it!

The diamond. He had not done enough to this Commie to kill him. Besides, it is impossible to kill Commies with a tap on the head. This diamond swapped souls. What had happened? He was not the Commie and he wasn't transferred anywhere. What had occurred?

Suddenly Jan flashed brightly. He had said something right there at the last. Something—Ah! He had said "Go to hell!" Had the Commie actually gone?

Hurriedly Jan thrust his way

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through the crowd. He could hear the elevators bringing up people. He knew police would be there in an instant. He held the diamond close to the Commie. "Come back from hell!"

The Commie did not stir.

This added a frantic note to Jan's voice. Something was wrong. He looked at the diamond. Suddenly he saw the tetrahedron within it. Banishing and conjuring signs were well known to Jan. The diamond was flat. The tetrahedron was pointed toward one flat surface. To conjure, or invoke, the point would have to be upwards.

"I conjure you to return from hell!" said Jan.

The Commie stirred! Jan's breathing became a little less irregular. The stenographers drew back. Two police officers shouldered in. The Commie sat up, eyes caught for an instant by the flash of the diamond. Then he looked up and saw Jan. He let out a scream and wriggled back. He saw the police.

"Arrest that man!" said the Commie with that opportunism which has spread the ideology so far amongst morons. "He attacked me with a deadly weapon!"

"Who attacked who?" said one of the police.

"He attacked me!" yelped the Commie. "He suddenly went crazy! Insane!"

"Did you?" said the officer.

"Yes," said Jan. "I—"

"Have to come along with us," said the officer. "You too if you want to prefer charges," he added to Lucar.

"But this is Mr. Palmer, president of Bering Steam" said a clerk.

"Don't care who he is," said the officer. "Law is law."

UNAPPRECIATIVE of this point in the mechanics of democracy and probably never realizing that if he had been up against a COMMISSAR not a mere corporation head he would, by now, have been riddled in his tracks, the Commie tailed triumphantly along. "He suddenly went insane," he informed all who asked. And "went crazy and attacked me," became the statement on the blotter.

At the station Jan was booked, fingerprinted, photographed and stripped of possessions. The diamond, as the dangerous weapon, had been taken from him immediately after arrest, before it could be used by Jan's dazed wits. The diamond was placed, with Jan's wallet, rings and tiepin, in a box and the box was put in the safe. Jan was herded into a cell.

He was confident that his attorney would have him bailed out of there in a matter of a few hours. In that confidence he was mistaken. The board of directors, intent upon blocking a highway, managed to dissuade the company lawyer from posting bail, and in view of the fact that Jan had once been accused of murder, bought further delay by sending a psychiatrist down to see Jan in the jail, meanwhile informing Alice that her husband had been taken ill. These little tasks attended to, the board went on quietly with its meeting, hopeful that it could have another session tomorrow and the next day and the next and so settle things very much its own way throughout the concerns of Bering Steam. Palmer had been too definite lately, they agreed, forgetting the last few days of relapse.

The psychiatrist was a very learned man if not quite bright. He examined the idea that the blow on the head might have unsettled Jan's wits but, being a rather backward individual the psychiatrist had neglected to read anything about dianetics, though it was well known to his fellow psychiatrists.

Dr. Dyhard looked fixedly at Jan and tapped his pince-nez on his thumb.

"My boy," said Dr. Dyhard, "I

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see definite indications here of a classic schizophrenia with paranoid delusions. You maintained this diamond was stolen from you last night by a Communist lumberjack. You committed mayhem on a Communist union leader today. The diamond was still in your possession this morning, therefore you must have merely fallen and bumped your head. I believe you consider yourself to be persecuted. As a capitalist you doubtlessly believe that your persecution comes from Communists. My boy, Communism is merely an ideology. It is just an idea. There is no danger from Communism. Communists were our firm allies in the last war. They are not persecuting anybody.

"Now I tell you what I propose to do. You once were accused of murder. You were jailed for it. Oh, I know, I know. You were acquitted. But here you are trying to murder somebody again. This is a dangerous situation. You must learn to control yourself. There is a new operation called the trans-orbital leukotomy which is just what you need."

JAN HITCHED himself further back on the bed. "I don't need any operation."

"It is my belief you have delusions, my boy. We can cure you of anything with neuro-surgery. It will adjust you. It will make it so that you don't become angry. It will make you much more tractible."

"A what?" said Jan.

"A trans-orbital leukotomy. It is a very simple operation. The patient is given an electric shock which burns out some of his troublesome brain. Then a long thin instrument is inserted into the skull just above the left eyeball. The instrument is then delicately swept from left to right so that it tears up the neurones in the frontal lobes. Then the patient is given another electric shock, a mere 110 volts AC from temple to temple. The long thin piece of steel is then inserted above the left eyeball, thrust in several inches as before and gently swept from right to left which tears up the rest of the neurones in his frontal lobes. Then he is given another electric shock. A few days later he may recover. After that his delusions do not worry him. Nothing worries him. He is adjusted—"

"This is not a real operation!" cried Jan.

"Oh, but it is!" said the psychiatrist. "And that is exactly how it is done. We neuro-surgeons have the answer to sanity, all right. People never give any trouble when we're through with them. You'll be adjusted, able to perform simple tasks like feeding yourself and you'll have no further anger toward people—"

"Stop it!" cried Jan. "You're giving me the creeps! This doesn't really happen in this modern society! It sounds like the Dark Ages or Aztec sacrifices or—or—"

"Ah, but it is what is being used everywhere," said the psychiatrist persuasively. "We have many, many techniques. First there's electric shock. That cures most people. Thirty or forty shocks and they aren't much concerned about thinking anymore. Then there's insulin shock—"

"What's the difference between such treatment and Bedlam?" cried Jan.

"Oh, a world of difference," said the psychiatrist. "We are scientific about it. Then we have the pre-frontal lobotomy. In the old days people used to recover from one—the neurones would grow back and they have been known to think again. But we have fixed that. Now we cut out a big piece of skull and take out a wide section of the frontal lobes—"

"But the frontal lobes are what

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make man a thinking animal!"

"Precisely. And insanity comes from thinking. Men think and men go insane, therefore thinking is insanity. We have worked it all out perfectly. Then we have the topectomy. This instrument is like an apple-corer. It takes long, cylindrical sections out of the brain—"

"That's vivisection! You're experimenting on human beings!"

"Ah, but they are all crazy human beings," said the psychiatrist. "That is the difference. Everybody knows there will never be any cure for thinking. Freud has failed. Everyone has failed. And our patients are tractible, very tractible, most of them."

"*Most* of them?"

"Well," hedged the psychiatrist, "less than half of them get much worse after the operations but we can always keep them in institutions and out of sight."

"People must get killed with these things!" cried Jan.

"Mortality rate is very, very low," said the psychiatrist. "You'd be surprised. Less than a quarter of the people die on the table. My boy, we psychiatrists are scientists. We have said so. We do these operations on people in every institution in the land. Why it is an automatic procedure. Once people are sent to an institution they come into our hands and what we say is right is right because we say it is right. And," said the psychiatrist, getting angry at this rebuttal against authority, "if you think you or anybody else can question our right to do these things you are mistaken. Now I have tried to use persuasion. I will have to use force! You need treatment because I have said so. And you're going to get treatment!"

"I won't sign any paper!" cried Jan.

"I am afraid," said the psychiatrist, "that it is out of your hands."

"My wife won't sign any paper!"

"I phoned your wife before I came to call on you. Your company asked me to look you over. I told your wife strong means, maybe an operation was in order. And she wept and said it was too bad but if a psychiatrist said so, it must be so. There is only one cure for these rages you indulge yourself in. And that is a trans-orbital leukotomy!" He was getting quite purple.

"Do you mean to tell me I have no civil rights left?" cried Jan.

"Look at your rage! You think you are being persecuted right this minute!" said the psychiatrist. "You think people are against you. You think I am against you! That's insanity! Who supposes anyone has any civil rights when he is insane! Who has any say so about insanity but a psychiatrist. You claim that is a denial of democracy and an invasion of private liberty. That proves you are a paranoid! You think you are being persecuted! That proves it! You think I am against you! You'll see who has the say now!" And he ground his teeth. He reached out to grab Jan and Jan, humanly, struck back.

The psychiatrist fell against the bars.

"Guard!" He screamed. "Guard!" and Dr. Dyhard's knees were shaking in terror. "Let me out of here! Let me out! I'm caught! I'm trapped! Let me out! He's a maniac!"

The guard hastily let Dr. Dyhard out. Dyhard, safe on the other side of the bars, straightened himself up with vicious jerks. He glared at Jan with eyes blood-stained with anger. "I'll call an ambulance from the state hospital!" said Dyhard. "This man is hopelessly insane. A classic paranoid schizophrenic."

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DOWN AT the Friends of Russia Communist International Objectors Social Hall where the conservatives of Moscow met, Lucar told his story several times. It is not often that a Communist can succeed in getting a capitalist in jail and all were interested. A couple of fellow travelers, men who spread the word without getting paid in rubles for doing it like Lucar and Davies, heard the embroidered tale and, being employed on newspapers, saw that the word was spread on page one of the evening dailies.

But though all Seattle may have read about it, only one pair of eyes, scanning that bit of gratuitous propaganda, leaped and shifted with interest. Chan Davies, who had been hiding in terror all day, certain that the diamond had been stolen from him in sleep, sure that somebody knew, writhed and wriggled happily at this news and came out from under a culvert near Redmond and hooked a ride into town.

He went boldly, if crabwise, up to the back door of the Palmer mansion and coaxed the Swede girl out into the dark. Just as he had originally convinced her that the Swedes were discriminated against as a minority in America and thus that all Swedes should invest savings with Communist organizations because only Communism could protect them, now he convinced her that he had been the victim of Jan's racism rages.

After all, it said right in the story that Jan was frothing about Communism and had attacked every Communist in sight and it also mentioned a diamond which he had in his possession. It became obvious that the diamond was something Jan had tried to pin on Davies just to persecute Communism.

He was soon explaining all over again to Alice what had happened. Alice, weeping, assured him that if any charges existed they would be dropped. She was very upset by Jan's suddenly going mad and this strange persecution-complex he had. She had just now signed commitment papers and a slip giving Dr. Dyhard the right to do all within his power to make Jan tractible. And she was now on her way down to the jail to pick up Jan's possessions.

Chan Davies writhed and wriggled and said he would be happy to go along and act as bodyguard. Alice accepted his offer with thanks.

But Law, when they had arrived at the station house, forestalled any plot Davies might have had afoot. The sergeant in charge of prisoners' possessions was courteous but to the point.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Palmer," he said, "but it so happens that your husband's possessions were, if I may say so, a little funny. He had a diamond on him as big as my palm."

"Yes, of course," said Alice. "And he bought it, I suppose, for a present for me. I have come for whatever he left here."

"Well, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Palmer," said the sergeant, "unless you've got a bill of sale for that diamond or can tell me where it was bought, I'm afraid we're going to have to hold it."

"What?" said Alice.

"You see, when it comes to a stone that big being in the hands of a nut—excuse me—of a prisoner, we can't take too many precautions. Do you know where he bought it?"

"Why no. Can't you contact him?"

"Ma'm, he's out of reach now. They took him up to the spin-bin."

"But surely you can't hold property just on suspicion!"

"I'm sorry, ma'm, maybe we can't but we're doing it. The United Jewelers of America list a flock of big

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stones as stolen and we're checking with them. It'll take a few days. If we can't find out if it *was* stolen, then we'll have to return it, of course. But as long as we've got it, we're checking."

"That's illegal," said Alice.

"That's good sense," said the sergeant. And as far as he was concerned the interview was over.

Alice shrugged, put the wallet and small possessions in her purse and guarded by a tragically disappointed Davies, drove back home again.

CHAPTER IX

FOR NEARLY the entire day Tiger was too busy with ships to worry about diamonds. Once upon a time these renegades had had a purpose. Escaped slaves all, they had sought to form a revolution against the rule of the Jinn. With headquarters on a small island called Denaise, they had for many years recruited and plotted. But the Jinn were many and the temptations were great and they had slipped away from their original plan, misguided by the ease with which they gained loot and blunted by the tenacity of the Jinn to control the world.

Their original emperor had been named Lenny. A dreamer and an organizer he had yet lacked the ability to execute his plans when execution was due. Lenny had had on his staff several talented and worthwhile officers but he had also had one Stahlbein. Stahlbein had made himself extremely useful, he seemed to be much in sympathy with all plans as drawn. He attended to all correspondence and legal work and gradually, since he was efficient, details became more and more left in his hands. One day he could suddenly carry out his own plans. Seeing the folly of the idealism of Lenny and sharing none of the human sympathies of the initial planners, Stahlbein knew no remorse from what he did. Lenny and his closest officers were taken ill suddenly and as suddenly they died. Announcing the fact as an act of Jinn, Stahlbein, all innocence, stepped into command, a command he had long organized and shaped to his own designs, which had nothing to do with idealism. Stahlbein had seen that he had a powerful and rapacious group in these escaped slaves. He had chosen piracy, masking it under the name of vengeance and, assuming the vainglorious name of the Thunderbolt, had sailed forth on expeditions of avarice and rapine. He had murdered and ravaged where Lenny would have saved. He had enslaved where Lenny would have freed. He had used Lenny's doctrines to pervert and blind his crews. And degenerated at last into mere buckaroons, they had abandoned themselves to slaughter for the sake of slaughter.

Tiger knew some of this. He learned more. He found that there were still able people in these crews and these he promoted to proper station. He rid the ships, by launching them in a cutter to make their way home, of eighteen malcontents with the new order. And likewise he rid the vessels, but with vinegar and sulphur, of other vermin.

There was a furious energy about Tiger when he had a job to do. True, when his talents were insufficiently occupied and when life was apparently a joke, he could waste himself gloriously. But with a purpose and a need, so long as they lasted, there was no better man than Tiger for any job. In another world he had stability and constancy but no strength or direction. But with the strength and direction in this one, he could and did on occasion work miracles.

By the first dog watch he had wrought marvels. The magazines had been overhauled. Powder had been

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repackaged into new cartridges. Stores had been sorted and fouled or spoiled items had been jettisoned. And two general drills had been held.

He had spoken aboard each ship, giving them in tough sailor language, sentiments which might have been couched in much more flowery terms.

"You wanted freedom, you swabs," he had said. "You wanted to master the Jinn. You scrubbed the dog and lined your bellies and forgot your goals. Well, I'm here to remind you. Anybody that's against doing what you originally set out to do, over the side and homeward bound in whatever boats we can spare. The rest of you, if you've got the guts, may be standing up to a Jinn-officered fleet in a day or two and outnumbered a dozen to one. There's a chance the human crews will sit down on the job for the Jinns. But there's a chance they'll fight. You've monkeyed the deal for years. Now's the time to sling hot pitch. You're for it or agin it. What's it to be? Mastery of the world or a boozing ken on Denaise and sometime dancing on Gallows Key? Which is it?"

They cheered him and worked with a will for the most of them were sick of idleness. And they began to shape up ships where wrecks had floated before.

BACK ABOARD the *Terror,* Tiger sat down to dinner in the cabin. Wanna, big-eyed and wondering, sat cross-legged on a cushion and watched him eat. She several times seemed to be on the verge of asking a momentous question and several times held her words. At last when Tiger had finished his food she ventured to speak.

"Tiger—" and there was honey in it. "Tiger, when we're home again will you—"

"Well?"

"Will you let me wear the diamond?"

Tiger grinned. He reached into his sash. He fumbled for a moment. Then he reached again and searched further. He looked around him on the deck and then, shooting out an arm, grabbed Muddy. But with a very few pats he ascertained that Muddy, who stood the while wailing and slopping soup from the serving tureen he had carried toward the door, was innocent.

With a frown Tiger sank back. He pulled off his headsilk and let his tawny locks into his eyes. He thought. Now and then he pointed a finger in one direction or another as though tallying up his thoughts by cracks in the planking.

"Huh," he said at last. "That's a funny thing. The diamond's playin' games. It's gone, then it's here."

"Maybe it has a spirit that carries it," said Wanna thoughtfully. "In the temple we had three talismen that had spirits which took them around. I remember one of the girls had the office of feeding one of the spirits."

"Probably it was a priest," said Tiger, who cared little for superstitions of the Jinn.

"No, they were real spirits. One of them sang awfully cute."

"I'll bet he did," said Tiger. "But that isn't solving where that diamond goes."

All day long he had had a headache. When they sank the *Graceful Jinnia* he had taken quite a drubbing but afterwards he had never felt quite so carefree. Today he had been far more thoughtful and cautious. Dim recollections of things he felt he had never seen or done were stirring in him. Blast this headache! That wound should have ceased troubling him some time back.

Absently he felt in his sash again. The problem of the diamond weighed upon him. He was sure that anything

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that valuable, with the three dimensional Seal of Sulayman in it, had marvelous powers. He had counted on those powers more than he had realized but now, with the diamond missing he began to understand some of his bravado anent the fleets of Ramus and Arif-Emir. He had planned on the morrow to make a few simple tests. He was sure that it had unexploited possibilities as witness the way it seemed to have transported Wanna to this ship and Tombo and Malek away from it. There was no lack of evidence that the diamond had abilities. Probably it had latent abilities he did not even suspect.

Suppose it did not come back. That struck home. A sense of anxiety, quite foreign to Tiger, was upon him. He felt as though there was a part of him which had come back to him after an absence and he felt also that that part was in trouble. And he felt, suddenly, that he might lose in this contest with Ramus or Arif or both, a thing which had not before entered his head. How much he had counted upon that diamond. He had not known it until this instant when, thinking upon the shoddy ships he now commanded, he realized how much he needed the aid the diamond might have given.

HE STEPPED out through the stern ports to the small walkway and from this gallery looked down upon the pearling white and blue of the wake. He was very thoughtful, a strange thing for Tiger.

He looked toward the even and unmarred horizon. That way lay Ramus. He changed his gaze. At a further distance lay Balou. From Ramus or Balou a fleet would come forth. Left to join, the fleets of Ramus and Balou would soon decide where their mutual interest lay.

Denaise, the stronghold of the buckaroons, lay a hundred leagues to the south, a palm and pine island with a landlocked harbor. Any reduction of it would be expensive to a fleet. Its surrounding cliffs were too high to admit scaling parties; the only attack point was through the harbor mouth. A few guns there could stop an enemy with ease. But when it came to a booty such as this diamond must be, when it came to Ramus and Balou joining forces, that attack might be dared and, further, might well succeed. The buckaroons of Denaise had, until now, been a matter of small moment to the Jinn who looked on piracy as no great crime considering the crimes to which they lent themselves in their ordinary courses of action. No, Denaise, attacked by thirty-five or forty ships of the line, would fall. Besides, a fort was a kind of trap. He could not retire to Denaise.

From where they stood, reaching idly back and forth, the r'yls of any ship putting out from Ramus would be visible. And any vessel approaching Ramus from Balou would also be in sight. It had been Tiger's audacious intention to plunge down on either fleet, the moment it showed, and disorganize it. He had hoped to learn to make the diamond help him. If he could master a few ships he was sure that their human crews, advised of the nature of the plans, would desert to the buckaroons. With these ships he might conquer the remainder. With a fleet thus taken and re-directed, he had hoped to attack the remaining fleet and so come into command of the sealanes of the Jinn world. Command of those lanes meant command of the Jinn whose traffic was all by sea.

He sighed. His head ached. He felt unnatural, as though he was also somewhere else. He reached in his sash again for the diamond on the

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chance that it might have come back. But it had not. Moodily he stared at the wake.

For several days Tiger repeated that gesture, for several days he paced the gallery across the *Terror's* stern and watched for the coming of the fleets. Each morning he searched Muddy and Walleye in case the diamond had come to them. Each morning he made Wanna look through her flimsy clothes to make sure she did not have it. But the diamond stayed away. Time passed. Soon, all too soon for the state of these vessels and the undrilled condition of the gun crews, a fleet would appear. And then, diamond or no diamond, he had no choice but to attack.

Idly the buckaroons stood on and off the coast of Ramus, reaching, waring, reaching, watching for the fleets.

CHAPTER X

"HOW MANY fingers do you see?" And Dr. Dyhard held up one.

With a dismal sigh, Jan said, "One."

This was an obvious source of aggravation to Dr. Dyhard. He had been conducting these tests for two and one half hours and he had been getting right answers.

He had had Jan transferred to Balmy Springs up toward Bellingham for Alice had pleaded with him, when she understood how serious the case was, to take every possible step and spare no expense. The last phrase had its own particular appeal to Dr. Dyhard. All his reputable colleagues had adopted dianetics sometime since and were prospering. Dyhard had never prospered. Too thoroughly bad a surgeon to remain in the A.M.A. he had taken up neuro-surgery and from this had degenerated into county work and was almost outlawed for his belief that socialized medicine should be adopted by all his brethren. They, feeling that Dyhard's type could not support a personal practice and must therefore lean on the state, spoke to Dyhard on professional occasions only. But Dyhard was somehow not averse to maintaining his own side practice whenever he could get a patient and had therefore short-circuited Jan from the state institution to Balmy Springs where, with skill, he could run up a considerable bill. The Palmers, everyone knew, were rich. Mrs. Palmer, Dyhard had found out, was credulous where medicine was concerned. Jan Palmer, Dyhard knew very well, was going to get a ten thousand dollar neuro-surgical operation if it killed him.

"What do the hands of my watch say?" said Dyhard grimly.

"Three-thirteen," said Jan with patience. He sighed. The room was small, barred and padded. The guard did not appear to be bribable, not that he was honest but only that he was stupid.

Jan raised himself a trifle on the bed, the better to look at Dyhard—and a strange thing happened. Jan's elbow slipped a trifle and he bumped his head on the bed upright. Since arriving here some days before he had been remarkably docile aside from some vague stirrings of rebellion. His head hurt furiously for a moment, for the wound was still tender. But instead of seeing stars he saw, strangely, a swinging hurricane lantern, turned low and suspended from an overhead beam. For an instant after the blow he could definitely feel the lift of a ship under him and hear the purl of a wake and the creak of spars in a light window. The odor of pitch and salt lingered with him a moment, then the image faded. The room, the bars, Dyhard

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steadied into reality and three-dimensions. But something had changed. The feeling that he was somewhere else was strong in Jan, the feeling that he was strong was stronger.

FOR A LITTLE while, out of his usually mild eyes, came the solemn but mischievous glance of another self, Tiger.

"Now how many fingers?" said Dyhard, raising two.

"Six," said Jan.

Dyhard blinked and came alive. There was a quiver of eagerness to him now. "What time is it?"

"Twenty-six bells!" said Jan. "Beat it, doc. You're wasting county time."

"Aha!" said Dyhard. "You're beginning to feel persecuted! I can tell! Your auto-erotic libido is converting! Now how many fingers!"

"You better stow it and scram," said Jan, "or I might decided to gnaw them off. Where's the guard? I'm hungry!"

"Hah!" said Dyhard. "Definite malfunction of the libido! I can detect it! A classic paranoid schizophrenic! I knew it!"

"Doc, you're going to be a classic wreck if you don't beat it. Send in my lunch and we'll take this up someday when you're a little more sane."

"Hah! You believe you are being persecuted, don't you? You believe psychiatrists are after you, don't you? Answer me!"

"No, I don't!" said Jan, getting annoyed and feeling stronger.

"That's it, that's it!" said Dyhard. All you patients think we psychiatrists are after you. You are plotting to kill me now, aren't you? All you patients get these plots!"

"I'm not so damned patient as you'd think!" said Jan, getting angry.

"Hah! Typical. You want to murder psychiatrists, don't you? You're all after us, you patients. But we've got your number! We know what you are plotting against us! It won't do you any good!" He wrote furiously on his pad.

"How old are you?" said Dyhard, looking intensely at Jan.

"Before I'm much older," said Jan, "I am going to enjoy kicking you the hell out of here, doc. Now git!"

"Hah! Persecution complex. A *classic* paranoid schizophrenic! Now tell me honestly, have you ever believed you were god?"

"Have you?" said Jan.

"Defensive and secretive," muttered Dyhard as he scribbled.

"Look, are you going to ring that bell for lunch and get out or am I going to have to—" he started to get up as he spoke.

Dyhard instantly leaped to the bars. "Guard! Guard! I'm caught, I'm trapped! Let me out of here, let me out! He's a maniac! Let me out!"

The guard instantly unlocked the door and Dyhard vanished.

"Calm down, buddy," said the guard at Jan.

"Calm down, sonny," said Jan, "and bring me some lunch. I'm three hours overdue."

But lunch did not come. Instead Dyhard arrived back with his friend Sharpington who, though not a psychiatrist, owned Balmy Springs.

"There he is," said Dyhard. "See that scowl? All classic paranoid schizophrenics have that scowl. All of them."

"Hmmm, yes," said Sharpington, hoping that Dyhard wouldn't kill this patient on the operating table. Patients were getting scarce since dianetics. Only the electro shock and surgical failures of the yesterdays were taken to private and public institutions now and this Palmer was worth two hundred a week for the time he was here. Of course, on the brighter side, if whatever neuro-surgery Dy-

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hard tried came out with the usual lack of success, Palmer would be here for the rest of his life, a zombie without will or coordination, a drooling thing which would have to be fed like a baby and wear diapers.

"You see how he is crouched there to spring?" said Dyhard.

Sharpington watched Jan light a cigarette. "Indeed so," he said.

"Psst!" said Dyhard, wriggling his fingers through the bars at Jan. "How many fingers?"

"Go soak your skull," said Jan. "Where's my lunch?"

"Abnormal preoccupation with self," said Dyhard. "You notice that?"

"Hmm, yes," said Sharpington.

"Good, good, good," said Dyhard, dragging Sharpington away. "Then you can certify as to his irrational conduct."

"Well—" said Sharpington.

"For ten per cent, of course," said Dyhard.

"Naturally," said Sharpington.

"Good," said Dyhard, "we operate tomorrow."

AT FIVE they brought Jan his dinner, served without crockery, knives or forks. The guard shoved it under the door and took a second tray across the hall. There a man was leaping up and down, screaming and raving.

Jan ate as best he could and the guard presently came back for the tray.

"What's the matter with him?" said Jan, indicating his neighbor across the hall.

"Him?" grunted the guard. "He ain't got good sense *or* gratitude. They give him the best neuro-surgery in the business, a first rate pre-frontal lobotomy and he starts raving as soon as he recovers. The ignorant boob's been screaming like that for two weeks now."

"Do they all scream when they get pre-frontals?" said Jan.

"Naw. Usually they're quiet. They just sit and stare. But him, *he* ain't got good sense."

"Does anybody ever recover from a pre-fontal lobotomy?" said Jan.

"Naw, but it's the best modern science can offer. That's what they say. But what the hell am I doin' talkin' to you?"

"You're talking to me," said Jan, "because you can make a thousand dollars." He had tried five hundred that morning.

"Whatcha think I am, dishonest? Get back there!"

"Taking five thousand dollars just to carry a message isn't dishonest," said Jan.

"What message?"

"Phone my wife and tell her to bring me the diamond I had."

The guard hesitated. "You loops! I'll do it for twenty dollars cash *if* you've got it on you."

Jan didn't have.

"All the same. Brother, I've collected a couple million in checks and notes that wouldn't pay off. I don't get sucked in again. Besides, you'll be operated on tomorrow and after that you won't never know what you're doin', not never."

He took himself off.

Jan sat down on the edge of the bed. For a while that afternoon he had felt brave. It had seemed as if he had contacted some part of him he had not before known existed. And yet somehow he knew that he had been more complete a short while ago.

A horrible thought hit him. Perhaps he had already had an electric shock! They gave them to people without their knowledge and with only a relative's consent. And they made the treatment look so attractive that relatives almost never disagreed. Per-

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haps he'd been treated. Perhaps that was why he was feeling so reduced.

The man across the hall was still screaming. Over and over he said, "I'm caught, I'm trapped! Let me out! Let me out! I'm caught, I'm trapped. They'll never believe me. My husband will kill me. I'm caught, I'm trapped. Let me out! Let me out!—"

Jan glanced across at him. The fellow had not been bad looking. But now his eyes were red-shot and horrible and somehow dead. The screaming was not real. It was automatic, without feeling. It was as if a record had been turned on behind his mouth and was running, over and over.

Up to this instant Jan had not believed that such a thing could happen to a man in these United States. But now the evidence deluged him. By the mere statement that he was insane, made by one man, Jan had instantly been thrust outside the pale of all civil rights. A murderer stood a trial before a jury. Only when convicted was he subjected to physical punishment—and his death was quick, it was not the sub-total euthanasia of neuro-surgery. The murderer was killed quickly and wholly in an electric chair or a gas chamber. His body was not left to live after his mind had been killed. And perhaps, below the level of that zombyism, trapped somewhere inside but no longer in control, the "I" of the individual remained, shuddering with repugnance at the drooling shell it had once commanded.

DYHARD held authority beyond the authority of mere courts. Draped crazily and unfittingly with the mask of "science", Dyhard could and did execute sentences of sub-total death even when his shocks and operations were successful beyond the highest hopes of the originators of those barbaric techniques which disgraced the name of medicine and polluted the records of surgery.

Jan was beyond any hope of rescue, he suddenly understood. Before that, as a private citizen, he had read of the "marvelous techniques" of neuro-surgery. He had read elaborate praises of methods which took out large sections of the brain or withered the neurons with raw shocks. Because the actual results had been masked by the title of "progressive science" and "medicine" he had not questioned figures which he now knew to be utterly fictitious and optimistic beyond madness itself. He understood dimly that these techniques derived from the abreaction of the hostilities of certain psychiatrists, themselves beyond the pale in their own professions.

What happened to the human soul in such an operation? What happened to the personality? Where was the gain, if after the most successful operation possible, a patient was incapable of affection, lost to initiative and adjusted on the order that one would adjust a marionette?

And that this could happen because his wife, ignorant and blindly trusting because medical doctors were trustworthy, had been convinced that it would be a wonderful thing, that he would be a better man, that he would return to society much more tractible and competent. On these professions, as false as a Russian news release and quite as generally released, she had consented to leave all to Dr. Dyhard. Where was Jan's say? Jan, why he had been branded with the indelible brand, the brand that none could erase—a psychiatrist had pronounced him insane!

What would happen to him now if he survived the dangerous operation? What would happen if luck decreed him to be one of the few who succeeded to the point of being only half un-

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manned?

The thought of it made his wits rock in earnest. Was this how unscrupulous psychiatrists made their diagnoses? Badgering a man to disgust and then using what he said to condemn him? He knew now that it was and he knew that if he did not come out of here before operation time tomorrow, he would be better off dead, much better off.

He grabbed the bars and began to examine the locks. But they were sound. And as he stood there a stretcher was wheeled by. On it was a young girl. Blood had spilled and caked from her swollen eyes. Her temples had been scorched by electrodes. Her mouth was slack and one arm dangled rigidly. A trans-orbital leukotomy, on its way to a cell, a woman, made a zombie forever, her analytical mind torn to shreds, ruined beyond repair.

Jan became sick at his stomach.

AT ABOUT the time Dr. Dyhard was writing up his operation orders about Jan, that day, Alice sat with teacup balanced on her knee and talked about hats and other vital matters with her friends Julie Breen and Stephanie Gorse. The visitors had more or less exhausted general topics when Julie, desiring gossip for the dinner party she would later attend, led into a topic which should yield it.

"And your poor, dear husband. I understand he was victimized by some labor leaders and taken to a sanitarium," said Julie, all sympathy.

Stephanie delicately nibbled a biscuit. "Ah, what trouble we do have with these unions," said Stephanie sweetly. "Somebody ought to machine-gun such people, my husband says. Mere laborers, entirely lower class, and they cause so much trouble."

"Jan never had any trouble with unions," said Alice. "The unions were glad when he became head of Bering Steam. It's Communists, he says, who make the unions look bad. I always believed unions were an advance—"

But Julie wouldn't let her steer away from the tid-bit. "No wonder your poor, dear husband had a nervous breakdown. What are they doing for him?"

"He's in excellent hands," said Alice crisply. "Dr. Dyhard called me a little while ago and said he was going to give him the best treatment available. It's a little operation. A minor thing, Dr. Dyhard said. A prefronted something. Really, they only give them to people they can trust, you know. It sometimes uninhibits people. But it makes them better adjusted, too. And Jan has been so badly adjusted lately. It has been quite a worry. He was actually quite rough to me."

"Oh, yes," said Stephanie. "I know the treatment. I read all about it in a medical magazine while I was waiting for my psycho-analyst one day. One has one done and then doesn't worry any more. It said so right in the magazine. I asked my analyst why *he* didn't do marvelous things like that and he wouldn't even talk about it with me."

"Oh, psycho-analysts are always fighting with the psychiatrists. They're not real doctors, you know, the psycho-analysts, I mean. The law wouldn't permit them to operate," said Julie as learnedly as could be expected from one who read *Woman's Day* exclusively."

"Did they try electric shock?" said Stephanie, hastily keeping her lead as the authority present. "My cousin went—had a nervous breakdown and they gave her twenty-one electric shocks. And really, she never knew a thing about it until she was all sane

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again. It made her well as can be, too. Wonderful, modern science. She used to quarrel with her husband incessantly about his drinking and now she rarely says a thing to anyone."

"I thought electric shocks didn't always work," said Julie, on the other side of the fence now, challenging authority.

"Oh, my dear. Of course they always work. All these operations they use today work or they wouldn't use them, of course," said Stephanie practically. "Of course she does have trouble—my cousin, I mean—lying down now. Her heart races or something when she tries to sleep. But really she is so changed. She isn't a bit quarrelsome about anything. Tell me, Alice, dear, will your husband be home soon?"

"Oh, in a few days," said Alice. "Dr. Dyhard assured me that it was nothing very serious. Just exhaustion. Worry or something. This little minor operation will make everything right. Isn't modern science wonderful? Dr. Dyhard says he won't worry after the operation. Dear, dear, I almost wish I had one done on me. It's in all the magazines. Quite fashionable, I understand. And so expensive, too. Ten thousand dollars."

"My!" said Stephanie, impressed before she could stop herself. But she was saved the effort of asserting afterwards that she was unimpressed by the appearance of the Swede girl.

THE SWEDE girl was desirous of seeing Mrs. Palmer alone. Alice excused herself, a little haughty as became a working girl who had married a millionaire, and demanded in the hall what the servant wanted.

It seemed that Chan Davies had found out that the chauffeur had quit and wanted the chauffeur's job. Chan Davies had a city license and he was an excellent driver.

Alice interviewed him briefly and hired him, the least she could do after the outrageous accusations her poor demented Jan had made against the fellow who, he was not slow to state, had lost an excellent job because the accusation had been printed in the paper.

Davies thanked her with a bobbing series of writhes which he thought were bows and as she turned to go said, "Oh, Mrs. Palmer. By the way, did they ever give back your husband's property? I have some connections, minor ones of course, but—"

"Why, yes," said Alice. "They did. Thank you for your interest Davies." And she went back to her tea.

Davies shifted his eyes on and off the Swede girl's face. "I sure hope it's put away safe. I'd hate to be accused of stealing it again like both of us were."

"Yah, it vas safe all right," said the Swede girl, beaming at him and thinking how nice it would be with him working in the same house.

Adroitly he recovered the data that the diamond now rested in a wall safe behind a picture in the library. Despondently he learned that the wall safe had been holding Palmer documents and valuables for years and wouldn't surrender to anything short of dynamite.

He appeared reassured but he went out on the back step and gloomed. Then he brightened. There was just a chance that Stokey Joe was out of jail and might be found at the Social Hall. Just a chance—a very slim chance.

"I think," he told the Swede girl, "that I'll take a run downtown on an errand."

Followed by her fond smile, he sent Jan's roadster skittering down the drive.

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CHAPTER XI

AT EIGHT BELLS in the morning, Tiger was yanked from a gloomy breakfast by the cry, "Tall sails nor-east by north, ten leagues!"

On deck he glanced at the look-out's post at the mizzen truck, and then, to confirm it with his own eyes, went hand over hand up a topping lift and swung his feet to rest on a yard. Hugging the mast, he stared, keen-eyed in a northerly direction and soon caught the white gleam of canvas there. Once his glance had picked that out from the tall cumulus on the far northern horizon above the land he saw another and then another skys'l. It was the fleet from Ramus! They were standing out for action. They would have Tombo aboard or in command. The strongest fleet was coming first!

Tiger looked down at the deck far below. The *Terror*, though much groomed, was a pitiful wreck of a ship at best. The others of the fleet, now five in number since fortunes of war had sent merchantmen into their hands, were still far, far less than twenty ships built and drilled for naval war. Pretty as they were, these buckaroon vessels from this height, white decked against blue water, ringed with their own spray and lifting in the swell, they were a mouthful for one broadside from the enemy.

Wrapping his headsilk around the lift, Tiger plumped back to the quarterdeck and brought up beside the helm. "Steer for a weather gauge," he told Ryan who had the watch. "You get below," he said to Wanna who, wind in her filmy raiment, had come bright-eyed up for the sight.

"I won't!" said Wanna. "I've a right—"

Tiger picked her up like a chip and sped down the ladder with her.

Sullenly, she permitted herself to be deposited on the bunk.

"See here," said Tiger. "There's going to be more than enough action for all hands. The deck may be swept by grape and chain. Splinters aren't particular who they hit and I want you whole if I'm to have you at all."

"I won't stay here and drown if we're sunk!" cried Wanna. And then she began to cry.

Tiger looked out through the stern ports. He took a stride and opened them. He thrust the heavy table into the gallery and lashed it there so that when the lashing were cut it would fall into the sea. He came back and gave her a knife.

"If we're lost, saw that table loose. You'll float until you're picked up. Use the knife on any survivors that try to haul you off to save themselves. Now—"

"You abandoning me," she wept logically. "You mean me to be cast up adrift on some foreign shore, alone, friendless and hungry, prey to anyone who—"

"Stow that," said Tiger. He stood perplexed and then glanced around. Old Thunderguts had had booty aboard. Tiger had never been interested enough to look for it. But now he took in the iron chest against the wall, the ship's safe, and with the keys which had come to him opened it and reached to grab some gems of value or a little gold she could tie into her girdle against need. He started to reach and then, open-mouthed, he stopped.

"What's the matter?" said Wanna, alarmed at his expression.

Tiger didn't answer her. Before his eyes lay the Two-World Diamond slowly materializing but already glittering brightly in the sunlight from the ports. He swallowed hard, so close had he felt his luck being crowded by the imminence of that powerful fleet. He grinned a grin of relief then and reached for the beckoning stone.

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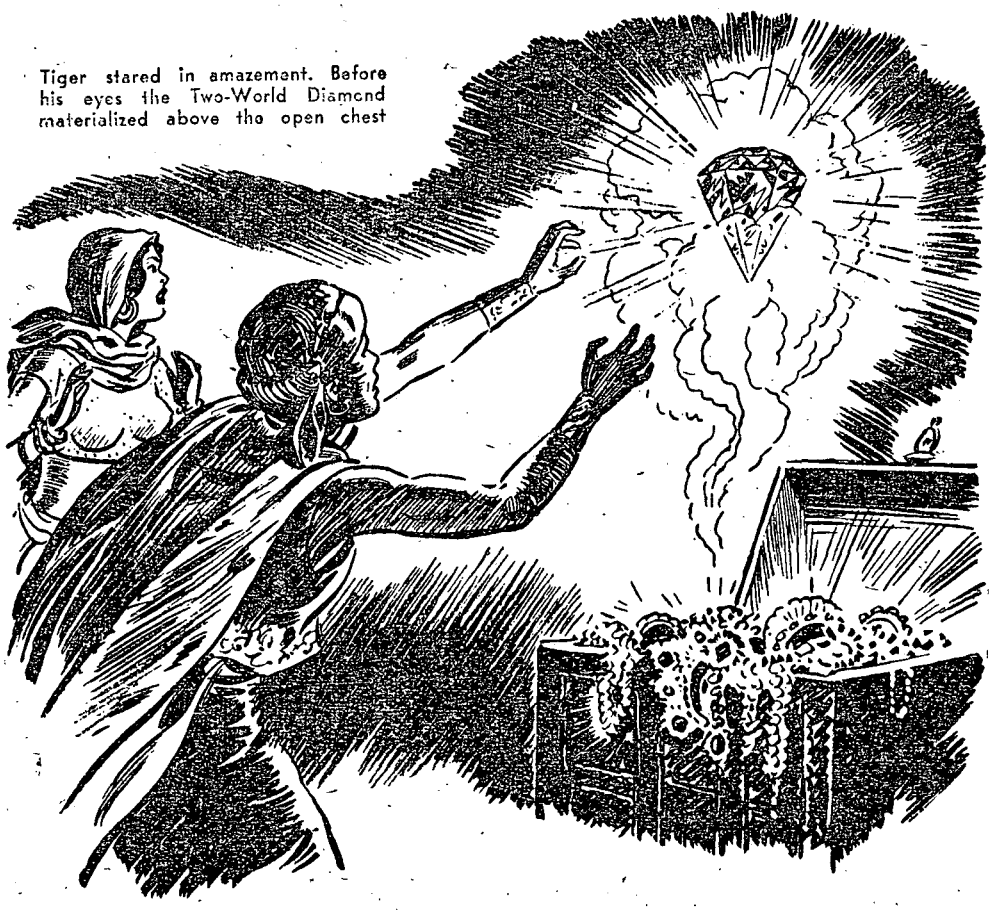

Tiger stared in amazement. Before his eyes the Two-World Diamond materialized above the open chest

His hand closed.

But it closed on empty air!

The diamond, an instant before he touched it, had disappeared!

TIGER swore and made ineffectual snatches at the place it had been. But the diamond had thoroughly vanished. He sank back on his haunches and passed a trembling hand through his tawny locks. He collected his shattering thoughts. The diamond had not been there the instant he opened the chest. It had been *arriving* there for less than half of it had been visible and even that was somehow nebulous. Had his own reaching for it made it disappear? He thought not.

Vague, half-memories were stirring in him, memories of his life in another world, thin things like dreams. He seemed to be able to touch those memories up to the instant he looked at them when they vanished as had this diamond. He harked back to the action of the *Graceful Jinnia*. In the boarding a grisled Ifrit had swiped at him with the butt of a pike, landing a blow which would have split the average skull. That injury had done him the service of laying him out long enough for the *Jinnia* to be taken without his being killed. He had revived when the marid marines had picked him up to heave him over the side after the other dead and the conquering officers of Arif-Emir had grudgingly taken him prisoner.

As he thought back, things had shifted at that instant of the blow.

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Just before that he had been aware of something he could not now locate. It was as if he dwelt without sleeping, as if he lived in another existence. Something was missing from his personality. Legends and sailor hearsay stirred uneasily in him. Another world, a world where humans ruled and Jinns were not. The Two-World Diamond which bestowed immortality on Ifrits— He was Tiger, yes. But he was also an entity elsewhere, somehow.

The Two-World Diamond. Why was it called that—? Did it dwell in another world and this? Did it pass from one to the other? And had it been passing, almost in reach to save him by some miracle he knew it would possess, when somebody in another world snatched it back? Had it come to this chest before?

The thought that it might have been in this chest before made him angry. He got up and booted the chest. Then he remembered Wanna and, stopping, scooped up some of Old Thunderguts' loot, a few emeralds and rubies, and thrust them at Wanna. He slammed the lid.

"Put them out of sight and if we're sunk, do as I say," he commanded. "And stow the gab. I'm busy."

She nodded submissively and he swung back up to the deck. He was out of humor, a strange thing for Tiger always so strong and sunny.

"Claw up to windward, you swab!" he snapped at the steersman. "Are you steerin' a washtub?"

"Lot of ships up there, Tiger," said Ryan, nodding to the north. "You really mean to attack?"

"We'll attack!" said Tiger. "We can't outrun them. We can at least take a few of them along to hell. I overplayed a hand, Ryan. I was counting on that diamond. It almost came back."

"What do you mean, almost?"

"Sir," said a youngster who served the cabin and whose eyes were sharp, "if you keep on this course, you'll hit Frying Pan Shoals. Beggin' pardon, sir. But I was just aloft."

TIGER looked at the child interestedly and suddenly smiled. The sight of the young face, the sound of such interest beyond his duties, brought Tiger to himself. "Well done, lad. You'll teach Ryan navigation yet. How's it you know so much about shoals?"

"My father was the sea artist for the buckaroons," said the serving lad. "They haven't another you know, sir, since my father was killed in an attack. They don't know much about navigation, sir, the buckaroons; my father was the assistant astrologer once to Arif-Emir, sir, before he predicted something wrong. He run away with me and became the buckaroon sea artist and he never run aground." He added the last with great pride.

"And you're a cabin boy, aren't you?" said Tiger.

"I didn't mean impertinence, sir. Old Thunderguts, he said he'd kill me if my father ever run them aground and these be treacherous waters, sir. I'm still alive even if my father be dead—but not by shipwreck, sir."

"Enemy hull up and coming fast!" said the lookout far aloft.

"How old are you, lad," said Tiger, unperturbed.

"Thirteen and I can write, sir, and read the charts and take pelorus sights and take meridian altitude shots and forecast coming events, sir."

"His nickname's Mister Luck," interjected the *Terror's* bosun unasked, passing with a work party which was padding the rails with hammocks against the flying of splinters. "And it ain't a complimentary name, skipper. He's been in bad ever since he read stars for Old Thunderguts and

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said he'd die by necromancy. Get along, sonny."

"Hold up," said Tiger. "I'm giving the orders here. Tend to your hammocks and boarding nets. Now there, Mister Luck, you say you know your charts?"

"All my father ever taught me was stars and charts, sir."

Tiger ran a big hand through the boy's blond hair. "How do you read the coming battle, Mister Luck?"

"How do you want it read, sir?"

"What's the width and breadth of Frying Pan Shoals, lad?" said Tiger. "And how much water in any channel through them?"

"F r channels through, sir. The deep draws thirty-one feet. The shoals run thirty leagues east and west, sir, and five leagues north and south. Fine fishing grounds. My father could tell you more, sir. We fished there many a time. That was when we had a yacht, sir."

"And how did your father get in wrong with Arif-Emir?" said Tiger.

"Enemy on a broad reach, gun ports down!" cried the lookout high aloft.

"Why he read the stars to say, sir, that Arif-Emir would die in a fit without any soul, sir. And it got worded around the palace, sir. And you're damned near aground, sir."

"Lad," said Tiger, "scamper up to the crosstrees of the fore. Take this brass trumpet. You can call steering orders? Very good, sir. Take us through the main channel of Frying Pan Shoals and your head if we go aground."

"They're called Allah's Revenge by the Ifrit's, sir and if the lunk on the wheel can steer, sir, we'll not go aground!"

"Wait!" said Ryan to Tiger but the boy was already gone.

"Well?" said Tiger, looking to port where the ships from Ramus had grown very tall and very splendid in the bright sunlight against the fleecy clouds.

"Thirty-one feet!" said Ryan. "That will take us through all right. But it'll take the men-o-war through as well. They don't draw more'n thirty any one of them."

"Pass the signal astern," said Tiger to Walleye, "to follow close in line. We're going through the shoals."

"It's a tricky channel but they can follow!" said Ryan. "You'll get nothing out of it but fifteen miles of uneasy sailing and only six points off the wind in this old hooker at the turns. And that youngun! How'd you know he'll be able to?"

"Old Thunderguts died by necromancy," said Tiger. "And anyone with nerve to forecast that has nerve enough to tell the truth. Old cowards brag, laddie. Walleye, soon as we enter the channel have the ships up sprit to poop. The water's smooth in there if the wind is brisk. I want them *close*. I'm passing aft to the rearguard as soon as we're strung out."

THE THIN voice of the child in the fore crosstrees, made bell-like by the brass trumpet through which he yelled, began to send his orders back. Ryan at first had been much discontented for it is hard to understand how a child may know anything so intricate. But Mister Luck had obviously been conning and charting since he was old enough to shed diapers, such was the confidence of his tones and the accuracy of his commands. Indeed, under the guiding of an indulgent father whom he dearly loved, Mister Luck had started spinning astrolabes when most boys start on tops and if Mister Luck was short on everything but navigation a master could have found no fault with his piloting that morning. He was up there looking down from an angle which made

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"Allah's Revenge" an undersea relief map to him, a chart in itself glassed over by the incredible blueness of the deeps and greenness of the shallows.

"Down a spoke!" came the piping voice up amongst the vast spread of tautened sail. "Ease her! Meet her! Steady as you go! Mr. Ryan, the main ry'l's luffing!"

"The upstart," growled Ryan. But it was true.

To port and starboard the breakers of the main channel were creaming white on reefs. The black ribs of a long lost ship jutted from the nigger-heads on the port bow, the carcass of another was combed by the swell.

The channel entrance was faced to the westward. Far to either side the seas were breaking and the *Terror* for some distance inside, still lifted in a swell. But soon the channel twisted into a southerly course and the swell was gone, broken by the expanses of shoals and shallows. The water became an absinth green and flat but the wind was brisk and steady at fifteen knots. Ryan leaped about and bawled his commands to trim and brace, scared at the nearness of the fangs of rock at each twist and turn. All they needed, he swore to himself, was a shift of wind and they'd be gallow's birds. Ryan allowed he could have run that channel himself but immediately shuddered over the next jagged shelf which came so close it seemed to graze their skin.

"Up, up!" came the bell-like voice from the cross-trees. "Up three spokes. Steady her. Up two more! Ease her. Meet her!"

The brown and mildewed sails slatted and spilled, too close to the wind. Another spoke and they'd be taken aback.

"Down! Down! Down! Down six spokes. Ease her. Ease her. Down another spoke. Ease her! Meet her. Steady as she goes!"

The *Terror* thrust around a channel bend, keeping near the windward bank of the channel. She was doing five knots, foul of bottom as she was, but Ryan and the crew, seeing the closeness of the menace in the murky green shallows and the sharpness of the outcrops lapping white, were absolutely certain she was doing thirty at the very least.

Ryan looked around for Tiger for permission to shorten sail. But Tiger was gone. By orders, four of the other vessels had drawn tightly into a line astern. Their various speeds and sailing and steering difficulties made them jockey and open and close their intervals, now almost overriding the next, now letting a wide gap appear which gave helmsmen an uneasy time in following the *Terror's* precise wake. All of them on every ship had watched the maneuvers of the Ramus fleet with stunned forebodings.

It had been very well to talk about actually fighting men-o-war but when they were there, tall mountains of canvas out of black hulls, studded with the brass of polished guns, alive with marine sharpshooters, the stouter hearts skipped a few beats. Twenty-seven ships in that fleet, eight of them first raters, the rest of them frigates. And the buckaroons recognized the difference between fighting merchantmen and men-o-war with a shock. They were heavy and sluggish as men-o-war will be and the buckaroons at first hoped that they could outspeed them and get by these reefs and with a windward gauge show them clean heels. There had been a chance to do that and it was with dismay that the buckaroons had found Tiger headed into the long and twisting channel of Frying Pan Shoals for it was obvious that the Ramus fleet could follow and just as obvious that at the far end, only three hours sail, their position would be no better and probably worse than before entering. Further, a

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grounding would leave a ship to the mercy of the Ifrit might.

ONE VESSEL had not elected to obey Tiger's order. She had plunged out like a hare from the line as soon as her captain read the intent and, setting everything from stuns'ls to the cook's underwear, she had raced seaward, using her weather gauge. Her anxiety was much appreciated by the rest. They followed Tiger but their hopes inclined toward the escaping brig. They watched her staggering forward under her press of sail, they watched her draw ahead and almost cross the bows of the two frigates detached to take her. And then they saw her masts go by the boards like saplings, their rottenness unable to take the strain. The frigates swiftly came up to her and overran her and their gunports thundered white smoke and scarlet against the helpless brig. The acrid mist hid the action but the rolling broadsides told the fate. The Ramus fleet was murdering a ship already vanquished and the thin sharp barks of musketry might have been heard thereafter as her survivors one by one were picked off the jetsam to which they had clung. The temper of the Ramus fleet against the buckaroons sent a quiver of despair through the remaining five vessels and they threaded close and hot through the torturous channel.

The Ramus fleet, not expecting this but supposing that the buckaroons would flee and trust to the weather gauge and lighter foot, were thrown badly out of formation when Tiger passed into the channel. The Ramus vessels, commanded by Ifrits were not bright, only batteringly stubborn and merciless. It took them long enough to recognize what had happened to lose any advantage of an early tack. The entire line of battle went on by well downwind of the entrance. Signal flags jumped high to their yards and fluttered there, commanding sparks of color. The van wore ship and passed the rearguard and came up on a port tack for the entrance. Like a coiling snake, the line of battle followed, the rearguard completing the ware just as the vanguard entered the channel mouth. This channel had no terrors for the Jinn. It was thirty-one feet minimum depth and in most places hundreds of yards wide, narrowing only at three turns where it would still admit a large vessel. A league, because of the overshoot, separated the vanguard of the Jinn from the last of the buckaroon vessels, the lugger Tiger and his mates had first stolen from Arif-Emir at Balou Bay.

Tiger, while Ryan acted as sailing master and the youth called Mr. Luck conned from the *Terror's* fore, called for a gig to be dropped over and towed astern. As it went under the counter he dropped into it and was paid off until he could swing aboard the vessel next astern. He landed on deck, glanced around and gave a volley of orders. Then he was dropped over again and passed to the third ship where he once more boarded and made his orders known. He visited the fourth and then the fifth and on the fifth he stayed. In the vessels ahead there was much activity. Tiger could look astern down the torturous length of the passage to the vanguard of the Jinn. Gilded bows and gleaming sail, she rose tall and majestic, her bluff bows whitening the absinthe green of the water, her conning officer, brilliant in lace insolent on her sprit. Behind her came the Ramus fleet an orderly parade for whom this pass was routine since often, homeward bound, they used it when it served.

Tiger looked ahead. A long bend was coming, a bend which would

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put the wind on their starboard quarter for a distance of almost three miles. He saw the *Terror*, with much gathering of speed, square away for the run of it. The brigantine behind her entered that portion of the passage. Then a brig and the two luggers of which Tiger's was the last.

TIGER HAND over handed into the rigging, a spyglass in his sash. He looked to the end of the down-wind pass. After that the passage stretched for several miles, nearly all of it curved to make the run of it a starboard tack. But where the down-wind passage turned there was a narrows not three ships' breadths wide.

The last lugger entered the run. The vanguard of the Jinn was a league and a half behind. Tiger swept them with his glass. The Ifrits stood out in their gold lace, the marids in their green coats. The human crews, scampering to the pop of starters in the hands of marids trimmed smartly at each order or stood by their guns, their matches smoking in tubs. How well Tiger knew those ships! How bitter were their crews! But they would shoot on orders and fight on no other ethic than that of high command.

Sliding down the run at increased speed, the *Terror* was shortly through the narrows, tacking sharply to keep from slipping when she had turned. Then, behind her, the brigantine negotiated the turn but hastily furled and got an anchor into the bank about twenty yards beyond the extreme end of the curve. She steadied herself with a kedge and then dropped back toward the narrows with her capstan. A smart sailor that, thought Tiger. One Buckaroon would get his due if it all came out all right.

The brig and the next to last lugger had no such difficult maneuver to perform. The brig, at the narrowest part of the passage, simply went hard right and ground into the reefs with a shock and lunge. The lugger went hard left, bounced off the stern of the brig and bludgeoned into the opposite bank.

Tiger glanced back at the Jinn. They were just entering the passage of the run and the vanguard was already picking up speed. At tight and proper battle interval behind them came the rest, twenty-six vessels besides the flag. They made, thought Tiger, a grand and beautiful sight.

With a swift drop down a halyard, Tiger reached the deck just before his own lugger struck. It pointed in toward a small gap which remained between the stern of the brig on the port and the side of the lugger on the starboard. The rendering and tortured squeal of wood and the snap of twisted pins was followed by the shuddering whisper of the masts as they began to fall.

"Stand clear!" barked Tiger. And the sticks went harmlessly down to drag their running rigging and canvas in the sea.

The three vessels, piled tight into the narrows, were unbothered by any swell. They settled gently, crowding and rending each other as the first two slid little by little off and crushed the third. Tiger's lugger was already decks awash. The crew, salvaging their belongings and treasure shares, sped over the settling decks of the brig.

The brigantine, aided by the wind, steadied by anchor and kedge, had eased back until she rested near the forepart of the brig. She was almost aground herself but the crews of the three wrecks could cross to her on hastily thrown gangways of planks and within fifteen minutes of the first grounding, all hands were on the brigantine, staring now at the oncoming men-o-war and at the settling wrecks

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which blocked, without opening, the narrows.

The Jinn must have seen the first grounding and then the second without suspecting that the way was entirely blocked for such was their angle of view that they would not have seen the complete state of the pass. The vanguard was halfway down the run before she realized it. Thickwittedly she came on.

WITH A cool bravado her captain began to furl without haste. A gang of human sailors were driven forward, swarmed around the kedge and struggled aft with it under the stinging whips of the marids. Signal flags snapped into view in the rigging of the flagship. The weigh began to come off the vanguard. Her kedge, properly hawsered, was dropped astern and she came to a steady, slow halt, still in channel, still intact. It must follow that she had to manage to turn herself with capstan and wait for a shift of wind or kedge herself up out of the pass. Behind her, with naval precision, the identical maneuver was carried out ship after ship.

Ten vessels, which had not yet entered the pass and could, by kedging, turn and reach back to sea the way they had come, were stopped by signals. All went smoothly with the eighteen remaining ships in the pass until a first rater, the *El Zidan* by some accident failed to grapple bottom. As eighth in line of battle, she had seven ships between herself and the blockade.

High-sided, sails still exposing great resistance to the freshened wind, the *El Zidan* crashed into the *Sapor* and tore out the *Sapor's* kedge which, when it caught again and tried to hold two great ships, shattered the hawsers. With the wind pressing them, the *El Zidan* and the *Sapor* crushed into the *Ramus* and the three, gathering weigh and pressed harder by the resistance they offered, swept rapidly down upon the remaining ships and smashed all into the narrows, a tangle of spars and rending hulls and falling rigging. Only two ships of the eight had held their own. The flagship, borne down upon by the mass was crushed into the barrier, her masts snapping into stumps.

A greedy and high-pitched fire chattered in the rigging of the brigantine. At a range of less than a hundred yards the buckaroons, freshly reminded of the activities of Ifrits by the fate of their shipmates who had sought to escape earlier, poured an accurate fire into the wreckage with every small arm to hand. Their targets were Ifrits and marids, particularly Ifrits, and the targets, gleaming in golden and scarlet, could not well go unremarked. Many an Ifrit dragged himself from the water back into the tangle of wreckage only to fall dead with a buckaroon slug in him. Many another raised a sword to indicate the brigantine as a target to some marid sharpshooter he had located and went into the sea before the command could be uttered, shot thoroughly and gleefully by a buckaroon.

The tangle of ships, the disorder of men and the clutter of entwined spars and hemp and canvas was so great that it was not possible to remove every officer by such execution and a small party was organized out of the wreckage to attempt to bridge the gaps and charge the brigantine. Marids and Ifrits and a handful of zealous humans were permitted to reach the coral just astern of the brigantine when a puff of grape wiped the coral clean.

And tangled up and confused in the wreckage was Admiral Tombo, rewarded by such command for his valor at Balou Bay. A dozen times death had whispered close to Tombo, a

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score of times he had sought to organize a means of attacking the brig which towered above the wrecks. And then death whispered closer.

SLIDING an inch of sharp steel into Tombo's back as the admiral stood on a tilted quarterdeck, Tiger said, "Be quiet now, admiral dear. One word of alarm and you're dead." One word of alarm would have been lost in the screaming din and Tombo twisted around to see Tiger, water dripping from him after his swim, teeth set in a hopeful grin. Tombo succumbed.

Two hours later, in the cabin of the brigantine, Tiger received the complete and unconditional surrender of all ships and men in Admiral Tombo's command.

The haggard Ifrit, as thoroughly frightened of Tiger as if that gentleman were Sulayman himself, went passively into captivity. Tiger had gained some four thousand human sailors and considerable armament.

But the victory was short. The *Terror,* uninformed of the action until she had seen it happen so that if it failed the main buckaroon vessel and Wanna would escape, sent back a sailing cutter as soon as she was near the end of the channel through the shoals.

A pop-eyed Ryan was told what had happened and why all these strange sailors were cheering Tiger for their deliverance. The telling was done in the cabin of the brigantine and Tiger was anxious to start up to the deck and pass a signal to the intact men-o-war.

"You can spare that," said Ryan. "It's evening and the wind's shifted. Your birds have flown. You got six out of twenty-eight and that's wonderful but twenty-two sail are gathered up there on the north end of the passage."

"I've got their surrender right here!" said Tiger.

"You ain't got the surrender of Arif-Emir," said Ryan. "And he's right there with 'em with fifteen more men-o-war. They're peaceful. Go see for yourself from the truck."

Tiger knew Ryan. He didn't have to look. "Fish out all pulling boats from the wrecks. Cram them with men and weapons. We're making a run for Denaise and with luck we'll be there before two days are out."

"Where do you think those fleets will head?" said Ryan. "Denaise! And they may make it before us!"

"We've got to try," said Tiger. "Lively! Let's go!"

CHAPTER XIII

JAN WOKE with a strange tension in him. For a moment he hung between slumber and wakefulness, a sound lingering in his ears, the combined sibilance of water rushing under a keel, the whistle of wind in the standing rigging, the slither of steering cables. He felt for an instant the rise and buck of a vessel striking urgently through the seas and then the sound and the feeling faded from him and he saw overhead the dirty white of the sanitarium ceiling. He tried to orient himself back to where he had been. He knew he had been elsewhere but a moment before and now he was here but he could not recall. He sat up rubbing his eyes and yawning.

A new sound was coming to him now. It was an automatic, emotionless screaming, "Let me out, let me out. I'm caught, I'm trapped. Let me out." The pre-frontal lobotomy case across the hall, the case which had not been a success, had begun his daily rote.

Jan shuddered. He recognized his whereabouts, he knew what day this was. By evening he might also be screaming some nonsense or, at best, sitting with a dead-man's stare, finished and done.

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An optimism came to him. Alice might have gotten a writ of habeus corpus or some such thing. It was early—and then he saw the slanting rays of the sun and saw how little they slanted from the bars. It was almost noon. The institution had let him sleep, saving a breakfast.

He pulled on his clothes and while in the act he heard them coming up the hall. He looked around. There must be some weapon he could use, some way he could defend himself against this mockery of modern science. But the sanitarium was not in the habit of making things easy for a rebellion.

But they did not stop before his door. Instead they halted across the way where the pre-frontal lobotomy case screamed monotonously. Dr. Dyhard and two student neuro-surgeons looked interestedly at the case.

"If he had been a classic schizophrenic," Dyhard said, "the operation would have been more spectacular for he would have been far more insane."

"What was his psychosis?" said an interne.

"Why as for that," said Dyhard clearing his throat, for the chant seemed to make him very nervous, "he demonstrated some very strange reactions. It was most difficult to classify him, most difficult. He was clearly mad, though. He saw two waiters in the ink blot tests."

"Ah!" said both internes. "Two waiters!"

"Bowing!" said Dyhard for emphasis.

"Ah!" said the internes.

"What was his classification?" said an interne.

"Very difficult, very difficult. He came to us suffering from chronic alcoholism. Family very wealthy, very. And—"

"What psychosis?" persisted the interne.

"Very neurotic," said Dyhard wisely. "Drank."

"Ah," said the internes.

"And we gave him the best we could offer. Family very anxious to have it done swiftly. No time for Freudian treatment."

"No Freud?" said an interne.

"Would have been long and difficult and we're so pressed for time. Besides he had been psycho-analyzed eight times. He came to us too late. And so we gave him the best we could offer—"

TWO MALE nurses came, one of them carrying a straight-jacket, the other carrying a stretcher. They brushed by the trio at the door, entered the cell and with expert twists soon had the madman prone, bound and ready to be taken away.

"You gentlemen," said Dyhard, "will be interested in this. The topectomy is very new. It was imported you know. From the very smartest clinics in Europe."

"That was the trans-orbital leukotomy," said an interne apologetically coughing behind his hand.

"Ah, yes. Of course," said Dyhard. "But you'll be interested in this topectomy. The instrument is not unlike an apple-corer. First one takes out a round section of skull, about two centimeters or so in diameter. Then one selectively reaches into the brain and carves out a section."

They had begun to walk down the hall where the victim lay upon a wheeled table now.

"We've been able to do some wonderful research with topectomies," continued Dyhard. "One can take out the part of the brain which inverts images. He can take out the part which translates sound into thought. He can remove the portion which registers physical feelings. Very useful operation. I am sure that by re-

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moving a certain section from the patient here we can stop his screaming very easily."

"Ah," said the internes and the trio followed after the table and out of sight.

Jan had no thought of breakfast. He waited dismally, hopelessly. According to what he had been taught in school the pre-frontal lobes were that portion of the brain which distinguished man from the lower animals. In elementary psychology, much stress had been placed on this by the instructor, a kindly old professor who held the remarkable tenet that much was yet to be learned about the mind, that psychology, if a science, was, in 1936 at least, a very inexact one at best and that someday someone might resolve the riddle of human behavior. He had laid considerable stress upon the fact that the two lobes behind the forehead, at the front of the brain, were much larger in man than any other animal and that they probably contained that ability to rationalize which made man a rational being. What would happen, Jan thought anxiously, when his prefontals were sliced to ribbons by Dyhard? It seemed logical that insanity was irrationality. Why seek to cure it by damaging beyond hope the only part of the mind which made man rational? What strange insanity was this which stalked the society wherein the most elevated "healers of the mind" slashed and stabbed and withered with electricity the only portion of the mind where sanity lived? Could it be that some of these "healers" through long association with insanity were, themselves, no longer sane?

He shuddered as he waited through the hours. The sun slanted down into the west and his cell was but dimly lighted when they came again into the hall. The two nurses were wheeling a something on a table. They deposited it in the cell across the way and ran their cart to Jan's cell door.

Jan thought of resistance and then recalled the straight-jacket. He was too slight to fight them. His wits racing wildly, thinking hard for the last time he might have the chance, he submitted in the hope of a future moment better suited to an all out effort.

They saw he was docile and let him sit on the cart.

THE THING they had brought back Jan had supposed to be still under an anaesthetic. But as he passed the door he saw that the drugs had worn off. The thing would need no further drugs now, no alcohol, nothing. It was awake, staring vacantly at the ceiling. Tractible now, it obviously was, and it would so remain until the mercy of death came to it. The operation had been an entire success.

Jan clenched the edge of the table. The nurses were watchful but they had brawn and there was no place to run.

Evidently Dyhard, after the morning's operation, had gone about his affairs for he entered the hall now dressed in his street clothes. He saw Jan being wheeled by and Dyhard's eyes kindled with suspicion.

"It won't do you any good to plot," said Dyhard. "Watch him closely now," he admonished the nurses. And walking at a respectful distance behind the table, followed on into the operating room. He saw that Jan was laid out on the table and then started for the washroom to remove his street clothes.

The instant Dyhard was through the swinging doors, Jan measured the situation and executed the action.

"I can pay you twenty thousand dollars apiece if you will get me out of here!" he said urgently to the male nurses. "I'm Jan Palmer head of

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Bering Steam—"

"Pleased to meetcha. I'm Rockefeller," said the shorter nurse.

"Lie down!" said the other.

Jan appeared to lie meekly back. But the moment the shorter one leaned over to fix the straps, Jan exploded. He chopped a short rabbit punch to the base of the man's skull and then, throwing himself forward, struck the other with both feet. That one sailed backwards. Jan reached the door and flung it open. He was about to dart through when the guard, approaching at that moment, enfolded him in a crushing grip and bore him struggling back. The nurses were on him in a moment and the three carried him to the table.

Swearing, the shorter nurse drew a straight jacket from a closet and they crammed Jan into it. They laced his arms around behind his back in a hugging position and then they tightened the laces so hard that it was all Jan could do to breathe. They slammed him to the table and brought up the web straps three inches wide and buckled their huge buckles tight. Jan looked at the ceiling light, dazed with lack of breath and numb from the tightness of the straps. The shorter nurse put his head in a vice-like set of prongs. The other seized a razor and shaved the hair off one side of Jan's head.

They were satisfied now, their hostilities properly abreacted. And the shorter one went about laying out the sterilized instruments. Jan could see and hear them as they were lined in a glittering row on a tray. There was a device like a brace and bit which was obviously used to drill a circle out of the skull. There were long wire loops. There was a long, sharp knife and another instrument like a buttonhook.

Dyhard came out putting on his rubber gloves. The shorter nurse tied a face mask on him and Dyhard looked with grim eyes at Jan. They were the kind of eyes one might expect in a Roman audience or in a father accustomed to beat his child or an executioner bent on doing his public duty.

An apparatus was wheeled to the head of the table and an oxygen valve was turned out.

"Please," begged Jan. "Please don't. Please don't. I—"

They slammed a cone over his face. He tried to hold his breath and could not. He heard the rattle of instruments on the tray and the click-click of the brace and bit affair being tested and extended to drill the proper sized hole in the bone. There was a pass across the shaved portion of his head and it went cold with alcohol.

He was unable to hold his breath longer. He expelled it and, sucking back, took nitrous oxide into his lungs. The cone on his face seemed to spin. His reactive mind would record and remember all this and the last glimmer of his analytical mind told him that he was probably in his last moment of sanity. After this—

THE POINT of the bit began to screw into his bone. His scalp jerked away from it. He tried to keep from taking another breath but he could not. The cone spun faster and faster before him. The bit was finding a hold in his skull and the worm was going deeper. The extension blade began to sweep a circle.

Suddenly Jan was not looking at the cone. He was staring at an overhead hurricane lamp and he heard a plunging ship. His skull hurt damnably and he felt wrath sweep through him. Suddenly there was the cone again and the agony of the biting bit. But as suddenly he flexed his arms.

There was the crack and pop of webbing, the rip of canvas jacketing

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and the snap of laces which went like threads.

Tiger, strong and mighty, snatched at the auger and twisted it out of his skull! He sent the instrument crashing into Dyhard's face. With a leap he came off the table, leaving the frayed straps behind and with a sudden snatch had in his hands the heads of the nurses. He smashed them together and with a vicious raise of his knees, now right, now left, he wrecked his assailants for days to come.

The guard at the door had leaped ahead to help. He tried now to leap back but Tiger-Jan caught him, whirled him into the air and sent him crashing through a steel-net reinforced window.

Whirling, Tiger grabbed Dyhard who, in a rush, had sought to escape.

"I'm c a u g h t! I'm trapped!" screamed Dyhard. "Let me go! Let me go!"

"I'll make sure you're caught, you bilge-bellied lunatic!" cried Tiger. And he lifted the lid of the steam sterilizer and shoved Dyhard's head into it. Tiger banged the lid down, nearly breaking Dyhard's n e c k. "You're caught now, you swab!"

Tiger did not wait to see if any rose from the shambles. He swung through the doors and beheld reinforcements coming, attracted by the noise. Like a bull in a doll shop, without a pause, he went through them and out the front door.

A car was on the drive, Dyhard's. Tiger paused for an instant, disoriented, blinking in the afternoon sunlight. Suddenly, from a dual nature, he became himself, a unity anew.

Jan the Tiger swung under the wheel and stabbed the car at the gates. The steel was locked but the bumper not only parted the gate but sent one half spinning from its hinges. Tires screamed and he was on his way to town. As he sped along the road which passes in that section for a highway, he gathered himself into himself. Thoughts of neuro-surgery spun crazily with problems about Denaise. Dyhard's punishment thirst was shot through with the sadism of Arif-Emir the Ifrit. Tall ships tangled with tall buildings and then he began to get himself straight.

Insensibly separated after the Curse had unified his two natures once before, Jan the Tiger was oriented well in two worlds. Half of his mind knew suddenly things the other half knew.

He knew, for instance, that when he had reached into the chest for the Two-World Diamond and almost grasped it, it must have been also in his wall-safe at home, and, just as it was about to make passage between worlds, had been withdrawn from that safe and was now somewhere in Seattle. He knew that if he could not find that diamond he would probably be dead in both worlds for he could not guess whether or not he had killed anyone in that operating room and he was sure that Arif-Emir would seek to interpose his fleetest vessels between the buckaroons and Denaise. In the world of the humans and the world of the Jinns he could only be saved if he could find the diamond and if he could guess and use its powers, for powers it must possess.

THE TIGER part of him would take long chances. The Jan part of him knew caution. He pulled up sharply in the suburbs, parked the car for which he knew there would be a search and took a taxi. He had ridden three dollars' worth before he recalled that he had no money or valuables of any kind. That meant he would have to go home. And there the police might swiftly come to see if he would do just that. He had no illusions about it—he was an escaped maniac and would be billed as such.

He had the taxi pull up at the servant's entrance and told the driver

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to wait. He swept into his study down the back stairs and scooped some bills from a drawer. He came back and threw ten at the driver and did not wait for change for off a few blocks a siren was moaning and the moan was getting nearer.

Alice was just sitting down at supper in the dining room. He went by without a nod. To her, aside from his determined stride and face, he looked just Jan.

He spun the dial on the wallsafe in the library just to check. It was empty of the diamond. Alice, puzzled and concerned had followed him in.

"Who took that diamond?" he said sharply.

"Isn't it there?" she said.

But he was already looking at the small drill holes in the steel. The safe had been looted. His wits were working at a furious pace. He recalled Chan Davies and the robbery and that the stone had been found in the other world on Muddy McCoy. There was only one conclusion to that. Muddy McCoy and Chan Davies were the same.

"Have you seen that Commie around here? The one who slugged me?"

Alice was very confused. "Jan, what are you doing home? You were to have one of these splendid new scientific operations that make everybody so well. Didn't you want to go through with it?"

A siren was sounding in the street.

"Have you seen that Commie?" snapped Jan.

"I— No. I hired him but he quit. I—"

Tires were grinding in the gravel of the walk. "Tell no one I'm here," said Jan. He sped down the backstairs into the servants quarters. He found the Swede girl sitting in a pool of tears.

"Where's your boyfriend?" said Jan.

"Oh, oh, oh, he vas so cruel," she moaned. But Jan wasn't interested as Tiger or as Jan about the disillusionment suffered by all minorities so led astray. He extracted the information that Chan Davies hung out in the Friends of Russia Social Hall.

The front doorbell was ringing but Jan didn't see any advantage in answering it. He went over a window sill and dropped into the garden. He opened the back garage door and took the car that was pointed down the drive, Alice's coupe. He could see the tail end of the prowler car. He supposed that it would start up in a moment, sent away by Alice. But he had not reckoned upon the propaganda which tells a public about the glories of neuro-surgery. Two officers quickly came around the front corner of the house and started for the rear.

JAN DECIDED he had waited long enough. He jammed down on the starter, raced the motor and shot the coupe forward. One of the officers leaped out into the gravel on the theory that he would not be knocked down. Jan threw his left wheels into a rose bed, careened back into the drive and rocketed out into the street. His tires screamed as he turned and screamed again at the corner. He could hear the siren starting to scream behind him as the police got going.

Weaving through traffic along Meridian Way, Jan outdistanced his pursuit. He plummeted off the express highway and shot along a sidestreet toward the docks. He reached Alaskan Way and, playing it swift, picked up his lead by dodging in front of a freight engine. The squad car was paused by the freight and Jan hid the coupe behind box cars and dodged through a parking lot to a line of shabby warehouses where the Friends of Russia held out.

Jan saw the inconspicuous sign ahead of him and started for the door.

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But just before he reached it, the squad car, evidently on radio directions received from Alice whose only thought was for her husband's "best interests", swerved in toward the curb.

With a rush Jan reached the door, a command to stop buffeting him. He went up the steps three at a time but as he neared the top he saw his quarry starting down.

Chan Davies was intent upon a sheaf of papers, the result of some days of work and worry, which included false passports and visas which would permit him to reach Mexico and jewel cutters. He saw Jan and screamed. He raced back across the hall, chattering with terror.

Jan bounded after him and saw that Davies would make a back staircase before he could be caught.

There was the crack of a pistol shot. Jan's leg buckled under him. He fell. There was a slam as Davies made the back door and vanished and then two police officers were standing over Jan, steel bracelets ready. There was a click and Jan's arms were cuffed behind his back.

Stunned by the shock of the bullet, it took an instant for Jan to collect himself. He struggled to rise but two strong officers held him down.

"Is he bleedin' much, Mike?" said one.

"Not bad. You better call that doc that was taking care of him."

"Poor guy. Screwy as a bed-bug on the subject of Commies. Gosh, he sure wants to kill them on sight. Put some bracelets on his ankles. Got it? What'd his wife say the doc's name was?"

"Dyhard."

"Got him safe now? I'll go put in a call."

CHAPTER XIV

TIGER WOKE with the dawn pouring into the stern windows, spreading red light through the *Terror's* cabin. The rush and plunge of the ship, driven before a freshening wind, resounded through her timbers.

Dazedly he looked at Wanna asleep on the far bunk. He had difficulty orienting himself for with these sounds seemed to mingle, in his half-awake state, the screams of a madman and the footsteps of a guard. Then he abruptly realized what had happened to him. He was complete, he was himself. He was Jan Palmer. He had another body in another world and that body was wounded and in danger.

Wanna started awake, looked dazedly around and began to weep. Tiger went to her.

"I had the most terrible dream," she said, weeping. "I dreamed you had gone mad."

He patted her shoulder, calming her. With reassuring words he pulled on his seaboots, stroked her hand and went up on deck.

The *Terror's* people were swabbing her decks, hoisting frothy water from the sea. As they tossed it across the holystoned wood the sun caught it so that it appeared that they scrubbed with blood.

Tiger was no longer dazed. He was coldly competent. He strode forward through the work party and into the berthing where he thought he would find Muddy McCoy. There were blankets on the bunk but it was cold and Tiger came back instantly to the deck. He glanced swiftly over the side. The *Terror* had been towing several boats, the overflow of the stores of war which she could not cram into her holds. A severed painter dangled there showing that one of the cutters was gone.

He took a short tour of search through the ship without finding Muddy. And then he raised himself into the rigging and gazed astern.

The vessels of Arif-Emir, reinforc-

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ing the remaining bulk of the Ramus fleet, had had to sail slightly to the north to round Frying Pan Shoals before they could set a straight course for Denaise. This had caused them to lose a considerable length of sea for, additionally, some islets had blanketed the wind on part of that voyage around. The *Terror* and the brigantine, though heavily laden and gunwales awash with men, could make almost as much speed as the fleet which, in keeping station on each other, was retarded. It was possible that the *Terror* and the brigantine might reach Denaise on the morrow before the fleet was within range of them.

But as Tiger looked aft he saw that during the night the two fastest frigates, either of them twice the tonnage and with four times the fire power of the buckaroons, had been sent ahead under all sail. These, Tiger saw with a shock, were within eleven miles of the *Terror*. And as he watched he saw that they made, little by little, a slow gain. They were sailing on their best course, they were being handled undoubtedly in a manner calculated to stretch any previous speed they had made. Such ships were capable of standing a lot of wind and, with a glance at the sky, Tiger saw that more wind was coming.

Tiger sung out to the quartermaster on watch and a moment later Mister Luck scampered up the ratlines, a brass telescope in his hands. Tiger trained it on the sea. Far to port, lifting and falling, now in sight and now out because of its size in relation to the waves, was a cutter. It was heading up toward a tangle of islands and reefs and it was obvious, with a swift guess at its speed and course, that it would escape into the shoals before the cutters could reach it. There, he knew, went Muddy McCoy.

He did a quick calculation. He made his decision. He bawled his orders to the quarterdeck and with a dismayed glance up at him, Walleye passed the commands to the steersman and the watch. The *Terror* jibed and put the wind on her port quarter. She was less easy to steer here because of the swell but it was a more favorable sailing angle for her. Tiger looked back at the frigates. Behind them, hulls down, came the vanguard of the combined fleets.

THE BRIGANTINE sent up an anxious string of signal flags and Tiger replied to them with orders for her to keep her course for Denaise. That done he looked back at the frigates. They had also jibed. Their position was such that they had a shorter run to that cutter than had the *Terror*. It looked probable that they would be within range before the cutter was overhauled.

"Run out the stern chasers!" roared Tiger. "All hands stand to general quarters!"

The *Terror*, pressed almost beyond endurance by a wind which, as the dawn became clear day, rose to twenty-five knots and more. Blocks complained, spars stood from the masts, the mildewed canvas stretched. The silence of a ship under all strain settled upon her. White caps began to pick up and race along with her. The sough and rush of the sea through which she tore and the creaming of churned water were loud in the quietness of her racing tension. She was doing thirteen knots, better than she had done in these later years of her life, but thirteen knots was her limit with her cargo in this wind.

"Cut away all boats!" commanded Tiger.

Knives slashed and the cutters drifted astern, turning to broach in the rushing sea. The *Terror* picked up half a knot. Thirteen and a half ac-

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cording to the chip log cast by Ryan and Mister Luck.

Tiger mounted again into the ratlines. He was a little shocked to see how much larger the bow gun crews of the frigates looked. The bones in the teeth of that voracious pair rose up and as they plunged, engulfed their manropes. They were doing fifteen and better and they had a shorter course to run to reach the cutter. They might not know the significance of that small vessel nor know what lay in the pocket of the thief aboard it. Indeed Tiger himself could not be sure the diamond was still there with Muddy McCoy, elsewhere Chan Davies. But Tiger knew he had to take that chance to save himself in two worlds if he could and to save these buckaroons and humankind as slaves to the Jinn. The frigates only saw that the *Terror* was rushing down upon a small boat in the sea and they strained to reach it before the *Terror* could, for there they would have a chance to blow the buckaroons to glory. It was a bit of luck, thought the frigates' commanders, a bit of luck they could use.

Straining and plunging, the *Terror* quartered the seas. Before it the cutter grew bigger. In the brass spy-glass Tiger could see Muddy's writhing back, for Muddy, seeing himself the goal for the *Terror* and frigates alike, was steering his own race, trying to gain the reefs over which only his small craft could make passage.

"Port batteries!" bawled Tiger. "Load chain shot!"

The frigates were nearer now, much nearer. Only a league of white-capped sea separated them from the *Terror*. Only two miles remained between the *Terror* and the cutter. A puff of white smoke came from the nearer frigate. The dull concussion of it was faint in the strained faces of the buckaroons. The ball skipped across the crests of ten successive waves, sending geysers of white water up from the bright blue, falling short of the *Terror* by five hundred yards.

The buckaroons looked whitely at Tiger poised in the mizzen shrouds. They did not understand. They saw the cutter, but they also saw that the frigates made a steady gain on the same goal and would intercept them. Tiger seemed to know what he was doing. But fear was in them.

Another puff came from the Long Tom in the frigate's bow. The shot skipped within a hundred yards of the *Terror*.

"Load the starboard battery with chain!" bawled Tiger.

Though this was the off side of the action the ports were already down and gunners, late of the Ranus navy, stood ready to these guns. They hurriedly withdrew the wadding and shot and crammed the brazen mouths with chain shot, two iron balls connected together with a length of forged links and which, when fired, would spin around and around, a fine method of cleaning enemy decks or dismasting ships.

THE FRIGATES were lunging and pounding forward faster now, the freshening wind coming to them before it reached the *Terror*. They drew so far ahead in the race that it was obvious they would come up with the cutter well before the *Terror*.

"Stand by sheets and braces!" bawled Tiger. The seamen leaped to their stations, preparing to handle sail.

A report flatted from the nearer frigate. It was almost on the *Terror's* port bow now, well within range. There was a splintering aloft and the fore-royal yard tipped crazily and came lunging down at the deck to crush a Long Tom's crew below. Bodies were swept aside. Axes sounded in the wreckage. The *Terror's* bow

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gun was once more manned.

"Starboard your helm!" roared Tiger. "Bring her up. Brace and trim!"

The *Terror* swept broadside to the sea. Braces and sheets hummed, the sails trimming in ready hand for her new course, a reach. After an instant's slackening she began to pick up new speed.

Just as she turned, the whole side of the nearer frigate rolled white. From bow to stern in swift rotation, her starboard battery thundered out a broadside.

A solid shock crashed into the *Terror's* bows in a fan of splinters. The sea on the *Terror's* port, where she should have been had she not turned, churned high and white with thirty-seven battering shots which, had they landed, would have finished her. Tiger, watching the nearest ship's quarterdeck, had seen the order pass, had seen the gunner alert the frigate's maindeck crews.

The whipping wind fast cleared the smoke but it stayed long enough to permit the *Terror* a gain. Steering now for the stern of the nearer frigate, the buckaroons could read, *Mount Kaf* across the gilding. Jockeying his ship in close, Tiger reached the *Terror* across the wake of the frigate.

"Guns one to eleven!" cried Tiger. "Train for her spars!"

The *Terror* came on range, the *Mount Kaf* was speeding directly away from them but not quite fast enough.

"Fire!" bawled Tiger.

There was a shuddering reel in the *Terror* and a momentary backing of her sails. The white smoke of half her starboard broadside went whipping after the *Mount Kaf*.

The second frigate had shortened sail to fall back behind her companion and have a chance at the game. She was on a starboard run, her crews busy with a temporary furl.

"Guns thirteen to twenty-one!" bawled Tiger, citing the remaining five guns in the starboard battery all of which were odd-numbered as was proper. "Stand-by. Aim for her masts!"

The *Terror* was jockeyed closer to run perpendicularly across this second wake. The name of the second frigate the *Ras Faleen* became brightly visible on her stern, close aboard.

"Fire!" bawled Tiger.

The remainder of the broadside belched flame and smoke, the *Terror* reeled to port, and white fumes raced after the shot to engulf the *Ras Faleen.*

Tiger whipped around to stare at the *Mount Kaf.* His naval gunners knew what they were doing. Like a great avalanche from the sky, the *Mount Kaf's* mizzen and main were shedding sails. The masts themselves were teetering and then they crashed, borne forward by the pressure of wind. The foremast strained at the impact of the falling main, the foresail tilted crazily. Then suddenly all carried away.

A rush of air jerked his attention back to the *Ras Faleen,* now falling astern. The concussion of her stern chasers and the after guns of her port broadside struck at the *Terror.* Firing on the downroll, the *Ras Faleen* missed the decks of the retreating buckaroon. But the shots smashed greedily into her counter just as it lifted in the waves. The *Terror* reeled soggily. Then she carried beyond accurate range of the *Ras Faleen.*

A carpenter shouted to Tiger on the quarterdeck, "Three feet of water in the well! She's heavy damaged under the water aft!"

Tiger glanced over the starboard rail. He saw as she lifted that her

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hull was open to the sea. He looked ahead and saw the reefs and island toward which Muddy had been steering. He scanned the sea about for his quarry. He did not instantly see the cutter but he saw something else: they had cut the mizzen sail spar from the *Ras Faleen;* a thing which would not begin to cripple her. The rudder of the frigate had received a greater impact than the sails for the broadside had been too low. The *Ras Faleen's* officers were hastening a jury rig already but for a little while she would not steer. Her sails were being furled for she was turning into the trough, out of control. But she would swiftly be in action again if the haste on her quarterdeck meant anything. Already she was dropping a cutter to capsize it and use it for a rudder.

Then he saw Muddy McCoy. In a frantic rush the thief was trying to put into effect something of the same trick Tiger had played on the Ramus fleet. Muddy was reaching swiftly for the reefs.

"Bring the helm down! Steer for that cutter!" shouted Tiger.

HE TURNED, beckoned to two buckaroons and rushed below. Down there Tombo was in water up to his waist, locked solidly in the brig and certain of dying.

Tiger and the buckaroons half-waded, half-swam to the brig door. The roll and lunge of the ship, running now with the wind of the port quarter but soggy already in the sea, caused her interior water to rush and roar with a deafening din. The impact of it hurled Tiger and the mates about. They reached the door.

"You want to be saved?" shouted Tiger above the thunder of water.

Tombo, terrified, looked numbly at a man who could ask such an unnecessary question.

"Tell me the power of that diamond!" shouted Tiger.

"Let me out! Let me out! I'm caught, I'm trapped!" howled Tombo. "I'm caught! I'm trapped! Let me out!"

Tiger stared at him, stared at his fangs, stared at his claws. An Ifrit, yes. But in another world, all unknowing—

Gripping the Jinn's throat through the bars, Tiger yanked him close. "Tell me the power of that diamond! What can it do?"

"Let me out! I'm caught! I'm trapped!" screamed Tombo. "Anything, anything! But let me out! He's a maniac! I'm caught, I'm trapped!"

The phrase about the maniac completed the identification for Tiger. For a moment he had thought this might be the pre-frontal case, but that was not so. Tombo was Dyhard in another world! A Jinn!

But there was greater urgency here. "Tell me the power of that diamond!" shouted Tiger, shaking the terrified Ifrit, battered by the rising water within the hold.

"Only the Jinn know it. I can't tell, I can't!"

"You're caught! You're trapped!" said Tiger, pushing his buttons.

That did it. Tombo clawed wildly at the bars, his great orbs of eyes staring in terror. He saw the water surging, he felt the ship staggering, ready to sink. The overhead was a crushing weight to him above.

"Used with the banishing sign, point down, it sends any of the Jinn anywhere! It accompanies only the human soul. Humans cannot move with it. It moves between the worlds only when it is in human hands! Save me!"

"More!" said Tiger. "Tell me more!"

"I'm betraying the Jinn!" wailed

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Tombo. But a wave in the hold surged over him and almost drowned him and he screamed, "With the point of the seal up it will invoke the spirit of Sulayman himself from the world of the dead! Spare me! I've told! That is why we stole it! So long as we have it our enslaver cannot return from the dead! I'm a traitor! I'm a traitor!" He was staggered off his feet by a stronger rush of black water. "I'm caught!" he screamed. "I'm caught! I'm trapped! There's no incantation. Just tell it what you want! Oh, let me out! Let me out! I'm caught!"

Tiger struck at the lock and the door swung wide. But as he started to fall back to the ladder there was a leaping crunch of keel on reef and the *Terror,* driven full aground only minutes before she sank, reeled crazily like a stricken horse, twisted down, rose and fell back, pierced in fifty places by the jagged coral fangs. She lunged drunkenly as the breaking waves struck her. She rose and fell back, driven further on, pierced anew. There was a crash on the stricken deck as a hail of yards and canvas came down.

Battered by the waves within the hold, Tiger fought through the black water and grasped the ladder. He reached back and yanked his shipmates up and then seized Tombo and thrust him on ahead.

TIGER sprang from the hold, sidestepped a late falling block and a tangle of running rigging and looked at a vista of breaking sea and ruined ship.

Cannon, loose from their tackles, bright-spotted with glistening spray were breaking away from the higher side and smashing across to splinter through the bulwarks on the other side of the deck. In the blazing sunlight and fresh wind, the *Terror* was dying and dying hard.

A new comber hit her, lifted her and thrust her further aground. She staggered and slipped, heeled the other way. The cannon on the side now high, loosened by the shocks, sprang away like things alive and carrying all before them raced and spun across the decks to crash through the down rail and overboard.

The ship's company was crowded on her forecastle and diving, one after another, into the lagoon which was quiet, guarded by the reef the *Terror* spanned.

Wanna stood holding hard to a belaying pin rail on the quarterdeck, supported by Mr. Luck. They were being swept by the breaking combers. Tiger fought towards them. A larger wave lifted the wreck again and drove it further across the reef.

Ryan was suddenly at Tiger's side. They dodged a spinning cannon, sidestepped a falling spar and reached the quarterdeck. Tiger swept up Wanna, Ryan grabbed Mister Luck and they staggered across the crazily shuddering deck. There was a groan throughout the timbers and the sound of rending wood. The wreck was breaking in half.

They reached the lowering bows, almost in the water now, and stepped into the lagoon. Swimming the few yards which took them to shallower water, they staggered to their feet. Tiger set Wanna down in a depth which came only to her waist and stared about.

The wreck of the cutter drifted in the lagoon a few hundred yards away. A battered Muddy McCoy was seeking to make all speed away from there floundering to land. Tiger dived forward. Using a fast crawl stroke much swifter than walking, he had, in the space of minutes, the throat of McCoy in his aching hands.

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But it was not Muddy McCoy's throat he wanted. It was the lump in Muddy's sash. With eager fingers Tiger took unto himself the Two-World Diamond.

Seaward, the *Ras Faleen* was standing in as close as she dared, gun ports open, the black mouth of grape-stuffed cannon hungry to cut down the *Terror's* crew as it struggled toward the far beach.

CHAPTER XV

THE DIAMOND blazed in the sunlight, bluer than the deep, whiter than the spray which flew above the reef. In its depths lay the three-dimensional Seal of Sulayman, the monarch who had conquered once all the tribes of Jinn.

The fleets of Ramus and Arif-Emir stood high on the near horizon like clouds. The *Ras Faleen*, clumsily steered but adventuring revenge just the same, steadied on her course to give a maximum sweep of the luckless buckaroons. Her captain on her quarterdeck raised his claws to command commence firing.

Tiger gazed into the depths of the stone and pointed the seal down in the banishing sign.

"Ifrits and Marids of the *Ras Faleen!* To the center of the Withered Desert all! Go!"

The *Ras Faleen* pursued her course. The din of the surf was such that no sounds reached the lagoon. But Tiger had eyes to see. And he saw a blur where her Ifrit officers had stood and the officers were not there anymore. And he saw where the green-coated marids had stood in her shrouds. And those spots were empty. And he saw, like dolls at this distance, the human gunners mates staring toward the quarterdeck, waiting for command and then start aft in an amazed walk.

For the *Ras Faleen* was without commander or officers or marines and had left but her human crew. And if one cared, that moment, to go to the Withered Desert he would have found a stunned group of Ifrits staring about, naval coats unfitting for that scenery of desolation and sand.

Tiger floundered into the shallows and reached the beach. Ahead there was an inlet where the reef broke and the surf, calmed by the constricted entrance, purred down upon the strand. He stopped there and thrust the diamond, still in his hand, beneath a flat but easily recognizable stone.

"By the Seal of Sulayman!" he said, "I wish I were the most commanding fellow on the *Ras Faleen!*"

He jerked back his hand, the diamond out of sight, but almost before the gesture was done—

Whirrr! Zzzzt!

He stood upon the quarterdeck of the *Ras Faleen*, finding himself to be a black-bearded, huge-chested human wearing a gunner's striped shirt.

The crew was still stunned but gathering aft with wondering looks, peering under things and into boats to find out what had happened to their enslavers, the Ifrits.

"Avast, you swabs!" roared Tiger in his new identity, discovering his voice to be somewhat more resounding than a bull's. "I'm taking command here and if there's argument, speak up so I can feed you to the sharks! Launch the cutter and the gig! Lively now. Shorten sail! Easy with that helm, you farmer."

"What the hell's got into you, Pete?" said a gunner's mate.

Tiger as Pete took one swipe at the gunner's mate and knocked him halfway the length of the waist. "Lively now!" he roared at the men.

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They blinked, bewildered and because of that bewilderment, obeyed. The *Ras Faleen* fell off into the trough, giving them a lee in which to put over cutter and gig.

"Shove off," Tiger as Pete roared at the coxswain of the cutter. "Take her through that opening in the reef and load her with pirates. I'm following you!" He turned to a gunner's mate who seemed partial to him. "Take command while I'm gone. Obey him, you swabs!" he challenged the crew. "Stand off and on here and take the buckaroons aboard as they arrive. They're not prisoners. They're free men, naval seamen most, like yourselves."

THEY NODDED at him dazedly and Tiger as Pete dropped down a line into the waiting rig. His oarsmen laid on with a will, making the light pulling boat leap swiftly ahead at each stroke. They passed the cutter before they were in and Tiger was first on the sand.

Tiger as Pete raced up to a bewildered human being standing by a rock and watching first the ship and then the boats. Tiger was interested to see how well his body looked despite the sea-stains. Tiger as Pete reached under the rock, grasped the diamond and said, "I wish I were you!"

Whirrr! Zzzzt!

Tiger, as himself, was looking at an even further dazed Pete.

"I'm Tiger," said Tiger. "You've heard of me. I'm taking command of the *Ras Faleen* from you as of now."

"But I don't command her. Sabud—"

"I'm taking command anyway," said Tiger. "We've a lot of Ramus navy men here mixed up with these buckaroons. We're going to save the lot. You understand?"

Pete didn't and scratched his blackbeard in an effort to think. And while he was doing that, Tiger hailed the first of the buckaroons and Tombo's men he had taken from the fleet and began a transport to the *Ras Faleen.*

Two hours later the frigate was crammed with men and the last of the Terror's people were aboard. The main fleets were almost arriving now, the first of the men-o-war but two miles off.

Having made a clinical test with Tombo, Tiger had determined that Ifrits, when commanded by the diamond, sailed very nicely far away. Tombo was part of a bewildered group of naval men in the Whitered Desert now.

Standing beside the signalman of the *Ras Faleen,* Tiger scanned the oncoming ships. "Hoist a signal," he ordered, "to the effect that all vessels are to proceed to Ramus harbor."

"What?" blinked the signalman. "But—"

"Sign it 'Tiger'. They'll understand soon enough."

The signalman grinned and Tiger sped below. In the privacy of the cabin he took out the diamond. He pointed the seal downward.

"By the Seal of Sulayman," he said, "all officers and marids in all the nearby fleet to the Withered Desert, go!"

Two hours later, Tiger, cheered by the liberated human crews ship after ship as he passed, reached the *Magnificent* and to that mighty first-rater transferred his flag.

The naval vessels which had drifted aimlessly, merely avoiding each other when they came close to ram ever since their officers and naval police had so strangely vanished, gladly accepted Tiger's command. In the first place they knew or knew of Tiger. In the second place they had no other choice. Electing from their numbers officers of their own and ex-

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pecting new and hopeful things, the human fleet took formation and made their way toward home.

THE SHIPS of the fleet cast anchor in a strangely quiet harbor. No shipping moved in the bay at Ramus. Instead the shore was lined with human beings in all conditions of misery but in a mood of uncertainty.

Yesterday their masters the Ifrits and the guards, the marids, had vanished from the land in some strange fashion and there were tales going around that people had seen them fly away, though for what purpose none knew.

A dozen pulling boats filled with armed men approached the docks from the fleet. The crowd on the shore, increasing now by numbers from the white and scarlet, minaretted town, expected Ifrits to land. Some were for mutiny against their masters. Others preached caution. Others were actually hauling up cannon in a feeble effort to make a fight of it in a despairing effort to escape the slavery to which they had, it seemed, forever been condemned.

Then somebody with sharper eyes than the others saw no Ifrits in the boats. Then he saw something else.

"It's Tiger!" he shouted.

There was a murmur. Several cheered. Others were afraid. Tiger was a source of grief to Ifrits and the following of his banner might mean trouble.

The crowd parted as Tiger came up the quay. The humans watched him and said nothing.

The sailors landed, fully armed and burdened with boarding nets and chains. They had their instructions. They spread out the nets on the wharf and made ready the chains.

Tiger waved them all back. Sailors took hold of the corners of the nets. Tiger reached into his sash and touched and adjusted the diamond without showing it.

"I command," he cried, "that Zongri the ruler of this land, that Arif-Emir, the ruler of Balou and Tombo, admiral of the fleet appear upon this netting! Come!"

There was a rush of air and a swirl. Dazed and staggering and much unkempt despite their gorgeous robes and jewels, the three named Ifrits came.

The sailors, with a seamanlike dexterity with hemp, lifted the boarding nets high and dropped them swiftly over the Ifrits. Other sailors ran in and wove the nets about with chains and straps.

"By Ahriman!" screamed Zongri, age-old enemy of Tiger, "I demand—"

"Pipe down!" said Tiger. "You demand nothing! By virtue of a power I hold and which you know I give you your choice between exile and a swift voyage to hell. Before these witnesses assembled, Zongri, declare to me the lordship of your lands or else, by Ahriman, you'll roast!"

Arif-Emir, understanding suddenly, gave Zongri a hoarse caution. "The Two-World Diamond!" he said.

Zongri opened his fanged mouth to deny it but his eyes held upon the bulge in Tiger's sash. Zongri closed his mouth with a frightened snap. "I have no choice!"

"Choose!" And Tiger's hand in the sash moved a trifle.

"I declare you ruler of these lands!" cried Zongri anxiously.

"And you, Arif-Emir, am I the undisputed ruler of Balou? You have the same chance."

"Don't!" said Arif-Emir. "I'll say it. Don't! Before any witness you'll produce, before everyone, I declare you ruler of Balou and all my lands, successor without dispute to the kingdom!"

"Then by my authority," said Ti-

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ger. before the bulging eyes of the multitude, "as soon as you are released, back with you to the Withered Desert, Zongri and Arif!"

The sailors let go the straps and chains and spread the nets and almost before the last fold was away, with a swish of air, Zongri and Arif were gone.

Tombo stood, shivering, alone upon the netting. "They'll kill me if they know! I pray you, Tiger, do not send me with them. Give me some lighter thing! I beg you!"

Tiger looked at him. He knew him for what he was, a Jinn that haunted in human form another world and wore the name of Dyhard.

"All I care to do to you," said Tiger, "is to curse you with eternal wakefulness and memory in another world of this! Except for that, you are free. Come lads, pass the word to the fleet to organize their ships and send me in a palace guard."

He pushed through the crush of madly cheering humans who knew at last they were free and made his way to the palaces of Ramus.

Alone in the great hall at length, he dared pull forth the diamond.

"Sulayman! Sulayman!" he said. "By virtue of this diamond hear me where you are in the world of the dead. The Ifrits who rebelled against you stand in the wastes of the Withered Desert. Bewitch them there so they can trouble man no more."

There was a rumbling sound above him as though the sky was laughing with pleasure at the deed.

JAN SAT in a hospital bed, a strong and forthright Jan. He seemed bigger than he had and no wonder for he held as well the power of his other self in another world. He was much besieged by callers.

A pretty nurse adjusted his pillow. "Your leg is almost well, Mr. Palmer. You can go home tomorrow if you like."

She smiled and walked away. The detective lieutenant at the foot of the bed was so engrossed in what he had to say he did not even look at her legs. "I hope everything's all right, Mr. Palmer. No complaints or anything."

"No, no complaints," said Jan.

Alice, sitting in a chair at Jan's left looked fondly at her husband. A definite change had taken place in her. She was her composite self, warm and interested, no longer coldly business-like, the artistic part of her come back and shining in her glance. She patted Jan's hand.

"Funny about that Commie," said the lieutenant. "Davies, I mean. The California cops that picked him up said he was in a state of nervous collapse. Scared stiff about something. He confessed to the two robberies and he had a stack of forged papers on him that would convict a saint. No hard feelings?"

"I'm sure he hasn't," said an unctious member of the Bering Steam board of directors, the ringleader of the failed rebellion, very anxious now to gain Jan's good will. "And if you'll pardon us, lieutenant, I'd like to tell Mr. Palmer about the highway that we voted to endorse to Alaska. I—"

"Well," said the lieutenant, twisting his hat, "I just wanted Mr. Palmer to know all about it. That was a bum deal he had. That Lucar that swore out the complaint was a Commie too, part of the same ring. These Commies always try to gang up but they're such a bunch of worms they sell each other out any time it's worth anything to one."

"I am sure," said the Bering Steam director, "that Mr. Palmer has quite forgiven the whole thing. Now, if I could go over these papers to change the name of the new ship to the *Greg*

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Palmer, Jan—"

"Well, I just wanted him to know he got a bum steer, that's all," said the lieutenant, "and we're sorry we had any part of it. We put the cop that shot you out in the suburbs. We kind of feel to blame, too, about lettin' that psychiatrist take you away. But how was we to know he'd turn out like he did."

"I'm sure I can forget about it," said Jan with a smile. "Thanks for coming to tell me."

The lieutenant breathed relief and left. The director got his papers signed and he, with many bows and ingratiating smiles, left.

Jan sighed happily, Alice's hand on his arm. He unfolded the evening papers, looking for the comics.

"What did he mean about the psychiatrist?" said Alice. "Is that Dyhard?"

Jan looked up from reading his favorite strip. "Huh? Oh, Dyhard. Yeah, poor guy. Started telling people he was from another world."

"Oh? Why there it is on the back page!"

Jan read it disinterestedly.

PSYCHIATRIST SAVED BY OPERATION

Dr. Felix Dyhard, local psychiatrist, who suffered a nervous breakdown last Tuesday was operated on yesterday, according to his colleague, Dr. Steining. The operation, the most modern technique of neuro surgery, is called a pre-frontal lobotomy which places the patient completely beyond worry. Dyhard, Steining said, was in excellent condition after the operation and can be expected to experience an uneventful recovery after which he will be transferred to the state institution until such time as some routine employment which requires little thought can be found for him.

"Poor Tombo!" said Alice.

Jan went back to reading the comics.

THE END

RADIANT DIGITALIS!

★ By H. R. STANTON ★

A PARTICULARLY "hot" subject-in more ways than one—is the use of radioactive "tracers" which are radioactive materials sent through the body for the purpose of learning something about a given disease or organic trouble. Among the latest reports issued on this extremely important technique, is a comment on the use of a very old medicine—digitalis.

Digitalis has been used as a heart stimulant for a very long time. But now it's being put to work as a tracer. Its chemical food and the carbon dioxide it "breathes", are treated with "hot" or radioactive carbon. This plant producing the digitalis, the foxglove plant, is then refined and the important radioactive drug applied to animals.

The digitalis is put into the bloodstream of the creature undergoing the examination. As it is carried about the body by the blood's circulation, sensitive Geiger counters are held outside the body and carefully traced along the path followed by the stream. Thus an exact indication of the location of the drug is obtained. This means that the doctor knows exactly where the drug is at any moment and how strong it is.

The importance of this technique to the future is incalculable. Those diseases and organic troubles which won't succumb to normal medical attack show every indication of revealing their causes by this method. The nice thing about the method is that the doctor can produce precisely measured quantities of material into any point of the body. In addition he knows all about the length of time the drug is acting, its intensity and the body's response.

Radioactive tracers are among the foremost peacetime products of the atomic piles. Would that this—plus power generation—were the only reasons for the piles' existence!

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GIVE THE DEVIL HIS

By Dallas Ross

Perkins struck as commanding a pose as he could and said, "I want to sell my soul!"

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DUE

Perkins knew that a demon would grant him a wish if he made the proper bargain—but this demon didn't know what a soul was!

"WHY, YOU look exactly as I imagined you would," exclaimed Nostradamus Perkins, student of the occult.

"You've got a vivid imagination, is all I can say," the demon told him bitterly, looking down at his cloven hoof, back at his barbed tail, and gingerly feeling the horns on his head. "What in hell did you think I'd look like if not the way you imagined me?"

"Why, I...I don't believe I get your point," Nostradamus Perkins said.

"Skip it, then," the demon told him, still fingering the horns as though fascinated with them.

"Not at all," the student of forbidden mysteries snapped, careful not

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to step out of the pentacle he'd drawn with colored chalk on his living room rug. "I have you in my power and expect to extract from you whatever knowledge I desire."

The demon looked at him questioningly. "You've got me where? Say, what space-time continuum *is* this, anyway? I've had some strange specimens call me up in my day, but this really tears it!"

Nostradamus Perkins said hesitatingly, "You mean you don't know where you are?"

The demon was trying out the tail, wagging it sharply from left to right, back again. "Of course not," he said reasonably. "Why should I know where I am? *you're* the one who did the materializing."

"Well," the student snapped, "you're the devil; at least I suppose you know where you *came* from."

The other eyed him in puzzlement. "You're quite devilish yourself," he said. "Now what's all this about, anyway, and what was the purpose in going to all the rigmarole involved in dragging me up here? Not that I don't appreciate the business, of course."

Nostradamus shook his head firmly. "That won't do. I know better, Satan."

"The name is Ozidaminos," the other said mildly.

"As I said," Perkins insisted, in what he hoped was a commanding voice—actually this whole matter wasn't going the way he'd planned at all; for one thing, the demon was so damnably *amiable*— "as I said, you are now in my power and must do as I command."

The demon stopped playing with his tail and scratched the end of his nose with a claw tipped finger. "I continually get the impression that I came into this conversation late," he murmured. "Now, let's start at the beginning. Just what have you got in mind that I can't refuse doing?"

"I want to sell my soul," Perkins told him.

"Your what?"

"My soul," the other repeated, his voice was beginning to reflect some of the puzzlement that had been in the demon's for the past five minutes.

OZIDAMINOS, for the first time, took in his surroundings. He noted the pentacle in which the other was standing; the bizarre looking brazier smoking to his right; the skull sitting on the table beside the old and tattered manuscripts; the charts of the Zodiac on the walls; he sniffed the incense.

"I'm beginning to recall this set-up," he said thoughtfully. "It's been a long time, but it seems to me that the last one to give me this song and dance was wearing a funny looking cloak embroidered with stars and moons." He paused a moment in thought. "As I remember, he wanted to sell me his soul too, in exchange for the knowledge of how to change lead to gold."

"Did you tell him?" Perkins asked, breathlessly.

"Sure," the demon said, "but I doubt if it did him any good; he didn't have either the equipment, the materials, nor the manpower to build the plant. I gave him the specifications; for all I know, he's poring over them still. Frankly, I've often thought since that he was a bit around the corner. What would be accomplished by changing lead to gold? The amount of work involved is considerably more than if you dug the gold in the first place."

Nostradamus Perkins was impatient of the trend of the conversation. "I don't believe you," he said, "and, besides, we're getting away from the point. The point is that I have you in my power and have a contract I wish to make with you."

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The demon complained, "You keep bringing up this I have you in my power stuff. Would you mind explaining?"

Nostradamus glared at him. "Do not think to throw me off, vile demon," he said sonorously, "I knowest full well thou must needs..."

"Listen," Ozidaminos protested, "stick to one dialect, will you? Do you think it's fun having to pick a mind for a whole language and then have the guy switch on you? What's this *knowest* and *thou* stuff?"

"Don't interrupt," Nostradamus Perkins barked. "I have summoned you and have certain powers..."

"You sound more like that customer with the stars and moons robe every minute," the demon told him, returning to fascinated experimentation with the tail. He was trying to wag it in circles now.

"Will you stop playing with that confounded thing," the student of the occult screamed.

The demon eyed him reproachfully. "It wasn't my idea, you know," he said mildly. "I never had one before. Suppose somebody suddenly tied one of these things on you. Wouldn't you have the curiosity to investigate a bit?"

Perkins looked as though he was about to prance around the room in his agitation, but restrained himself before crossing the chalk line of the pentacle. He shrilled his protest. "Here I spend years, *years!* in learning how to summon a devil, and what do I get?"

"You got me," the demon said. "What did you have in mind?"

"I had *you* in mind," Perkins shrilled desperately. "I wanted to sell my soul, but I'm beginning to wonder whether or not you could make the agreement I wanted."

"This soul stuff escapes me," Ozidaminos said soothingly, "but I'll be glad to give you what you want." He added with caution, "If possible."

The other took a deep breath and a sly look entered his eyes. "Very well," he said. "Do you have a contract?"

"A what?" the demon asked, stamping his cloven hoof on the floor, interested in the clattering sound it made.

"Good heavens, don't do that," Perkins told him hurriedly. "Do you want to break my lease?"

The demon said mildly. "You certainly are difficult to get along with. I was just experimenting with this fantastic foot you gave me. What's a contract?"

"What do you mean, *I gave you?* And you know full well what a contract is; I sign it with blood."

THE DEMON stared at him wide-eyed. "You must be jesting," he said. Then, "No, now that I recall, the guy with the moons and stars on his cloak had the same idea."

"Will you please stop talking about this man with the moons and stars?" Perkins shrilled.

"Sorry," the demon said, appeasingly. "Where were we?"

"The contract!"

"Oh yes, the contract. Tell me more about it, and don't get so excited. You'll get ulcers."

Perkins began to prance again. "I am willing to sell my soul in return for one wish!" he yelled in agitation.

"All right," the demon said, in a tone that suggested he was humoring the other. "What do you want?"

"The contract," the other suggested slyly. "I want to sign the contract first."

"Listen," the demon told him, "I haven't the vaguest idea of what you mean. You summoned me, showing you believed in me; very well, I'm grateful, now tell me what you want

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and it's yours."

"In return for my immortal soul," the other said dramatically.

"If that's the way you want it," the demon said, shrugging.

"Done!" said Nostradamus Perkins quickly, as though in fear the demon might change his mind. "And here is my wish. *I demand immortality.*" He began to laugh, almost hysterically.

"Okay," Ozidaminos said, "immortality it is. What's so funny?"

The other took a long moment to get over his fit of laughter. "Don't you see?" he cried. "I've beaten you."

The demon rubbed the end of his nose with the claw tipped finger. He said ruefully, "This is a hell of a way to make a living. What's happened now?"

Perkins shrilled in glee. "Don't you see. Don't you *see!* I've beaten you. You've given me immortality; now you can never collect my soul."

"Your code of ethics is lousy," said the demon. "Luckily, it doesn't affect me. But, frankly, and from the friendliest of motives, I'd suggest you change your mind about that immortality stuff. I can give it to you all right, and since I've given my word, will, if you want. But—are you sure?"

The other laughed long and loud. Until, as a matter of fact, somebody started pounding on the apartment wall with a shoe. "Do not think to confound me, Satan. Thou knowest full well that thou cans't not forswear thy pledge. . ."

"There you go with that screwy dialect again," Ozidaminos complained. "You sound as if you've been reading corny books or something."

"Your agreement must be lived up to," Perkins finished.

The demon shrugged again. "It's all right with me. You're asking for it; but you might pick out something a bit less hard on yourself. After all, I'm here to give you a hand."

The other stopped laughing and bent a prejudiced eye on him. "You're here to rob me of my soul," Perkins rasped. "But you'll never have it; I've beaten you."

Ozidaminos shook his head at him, in bewilderment. "This soul you keep talking about. Just what is it?"

Nostradamus Perkins gaped and started to say, "But, that is why you came. . ." then he broke off, a hint of suspicion in his voice. "But, why *did* you come," he asked, "if it wasn't for my soul?"

THE DEMON shrugged smugly. "I came because you summoned me. And, to be frank, I needed it pretty badly. There has been so much doubt in this world of our existence that we of the other world are badly beset. Old Ishtar and Aeshma Daeva, for instance, have practically faded away. and Zeus and his gang—you'd hate to see them, knowing the weight they used to throw."

"I. . . I don't understand."

The demon yawned. "Oh, surely you must, otherwise you wouldn't have known how to summon me for a favor. Surely it is elemental that everything is in the mind. Matter exists, life exists, everything exists, but in the human mind. We of the other world are dependent entirely upon your beliefs in us. You summoned me. Good. I am grateful. I am willing to exercise certain powers I possess and which you lack, to give you your desire. In return, I know I am secure, for as long as you live, *you* will believe."

"As a matter of fact," he added with satisfaction, "now that you have immortality, I am guaranteed at least one believer for the rest of eternity."

He took to contemplating his tail again, a shade of repulsion on his face. "You should have seen how the Greeks used to dream me up," he

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said wistfully. "I was really something worth seeing; you know, golden armor and everything."

Nostradamus Perkins said in bewilderment, "Ishtar? Greeks? Believers?" He scowled, certain doubts beginning to run through him. "Are... are the inhabitants of your 'world,' as you call it, Gods or Devils?"

"What's the difference?" Ozidaminos asked disinterestedly. "One man's God is another's Devil—it's in the viewpoint. Actually, we're all about the same. Of course, you humans make up a whole new set of rules and regulations every few hundred years, and there's a lot of er...propaganda thrown around, but, substantially, we're all about the same."

"But...my soul?" Perkins protested.

"Never heard of it," said the other. His head jerked suddenly. "You'll have to pardon me," he said, "I just got a call." He hesitated, seemingly distressed. "Sorry about that immortality business," he added. "However, you asked for it and it's yours. Frankly, I don't think you'll enjoy it, especially after the first million years or so. I doubt if there'll be any members of the human race left by then—except you, of course. But, anyway, thanks again for calling me up."

He disappeared suddenly.

For a long time Nostradamus Perkins sat and pondered the desirability of immortality. His eyes slowly widened as some of the ramifications came home to him. He didn't go mad, although that might have been preferable—in the long run...

PLANET P — UNKNOWN!

★ By L. A. BURT ★

SOMEWHERE, in the outer reaches of the Solar System, it is suspected that a trans-Plutonian planet exists. Karl Schuette's discovery that there is some influence acting on comets which enter and leave the system tend to corroborate this belief. Little discrepancies in the observational positions of fantastically remote Pluto add fuel to this fire. And judging from the way in which scientific observation and fact is hedging this matter, it won't be too long before the actual technical discovery is made.

But like most scientific discoveries, this has a considerable background of contemplation and thought. A number of prominent astronomers have long suspected the existence of such a trans-Plutonian planet. In nineteen twenty-eight, Pickering not only suggested mysterious planet P's existence, but even named it—potentially! He remarked about the discovery of Pluto: "it should have been renamed Loki because it was such a thief—stealing the peace of mind of astronomers." Since Pluto was named so, a good idea would be to use the name of this clever disturber for the new planet. Keep your eye peeled for another addition to the Solar System—a small, but not tribal planet, farthest from the Sun!

SUPERSONIC KILLER

★ By JON BARRY ★

THE CURSE of commercial and game fishing in the great lakes is the sea lamprey, a mostrous snake-like eel whose razor sharp teeth are irresistible. During spawning time they drift down the rivers and streams which empty into the lakes and mercilessly destroy any and all fish. Until recently there has been no successful way to combat them.

The Bureau of Fisheries however has come up with an ingenious electronic death-ray which promises to destroy the preying eel. Immersed in the water near the mouths of the streams which empty into the lakes are small electronically powered sound generators. These generators are driven at such a rate as to synchronize with the heart-beats of the eel, but not those of the fish. Then the frequency is varied and in the process a disturbance is set up in the eels' bloodstream, a disturbance which kills them!

This unique death-ray technique employing supersonics in an unusual fashion may be compared with the principle of sympathetic vibration which prevents soldiers marching in step over a bridge for fear they will set it into oscillation thus shattering it. It is easy to see that this system might have some important possibilities!

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The HANDYMAN

By Lester Barclay

Chores around the house took up more of Brian's time than he felt was necessary. Thinking up the handyman solved all that . . .

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The youth sat on the steps, his book in his hands as he watched the handyman cleaning the car...

HE WAS her son.

It was to be seen in the sensitive turn of the lips, in the gentle flare of the nostrils, the upward curl of his eyes at the corners.

She was at the other end of the sofa.

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Now and then she looked away from her embroidery to study the tight-boned passionate face of her son, bent in absorption over the book. The firelight made play on his features, haunting shadowplay. She smiled, caught the imperceptible movement of his lifting head, and turned her face downward.

"Mother..."

"Yes, dear?"

"What is a handyman?"

She stopped the thrust of the needle but did not look up. Tom, her husband, would have thought it an idle, foolish question. But Tom thought Brian to be an idle, foolish boy. Even their son...

"Why, dear...?" it was the first play of the game, a question to be met with a question until an answer was arrived at.

His dark eyes were seriously intent. "Dad was talking about one this morning."

She smiled. "Oh! That. Jerry was saying that there was so much work about the stable, now that spring has come, he would like someone to take care of the many things to be done he can't find time for."

The boy stood, his thin, straight body tense and oddly eager. "Will the handyman help me, also, mother?"

The smile left her eyes and lips. "Darling, don't you think it would be more fun to do the things you have to, by yourself?"

Her words were echoed by his laughter. "You sound just like Dad, now, Mother." The tenseness left his body and he turned with a disconsolate air to the sofa again and picked up the book he had tossed on it a minute before. His body was half-turned from her so that he was in profile.

She studied the small face for a long moment and, catching the sudden ache in her heart, felt a shudder of horror at it. Tom was so wrong, she thought, so wrong. If only there was a way, a means of showing him? But there wasn't.

"Is that the book your father gave you?" she asked.

He dismissed it with a quick shake of his head.

She patted the seat beside her. "Come sit by me a moment." He stood indecisive, then did as she had asked. She put an arm around the thin shoulder, kissed the fair temple, and smiled down into his eyes when he turned to her. "It's pretty hard to understand why your father wants you to do some things, isn't it?"

He nodded faintly.

"Like wanting you to read the 'Life Of Napoleon' when you want to read and dream of knights in armor?"

"Oh... Napoleon was always so right. And everybody wrong. Just like..." he hesitated.

Her fingers tightened on his shoulder. "Some day," she whispered, "your father will understand. He loves you, Brian."

"Does he love you, too, Mother?"

"Yes!"

"ALICE, I don't know what I'm going to do with the boy," the man said. He finished reading the memo which had come in the morning mail and laid it down. He looked up and saw his wife was not looking at him but seemed to find her attention drawn to something beyond the French windows which overlooked the near gardens. "Alice!"

She caught the exasperation in his voice and turned quickly. "I'm sorry, dear," she said. "Brian is out there and he seems to have caught something. Just look!"

"I would rather *not* look. He's being—"

"A boy, Tom," she broke in quickly. "What do you expect of him?"

"I expect him to be a man one day,"

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he said. "The boy must begin to learn this fact. Ten years old and still reading fairy tales... Stories of wizards and make-believe people. Child's play! You must understand, as well as he, Alice, that he has reached an age where the meaning of responsibility must be shown him. And your coddling—there is no other word for it—must cease. I told him to help Jerry with the harness this morning. But instead he has found a bug, or insect or something or other in the garden and is dreaming, I suppose, that it's a dragon and he is fighting it."

"Why not? The dragons of his imagination will never be as frightful as those of the real-life world."

He leaned back in the chair and studied his wife for a moment. "What," he asked coldly, "will he want for when he gets older? I have already seen to it he will be independently wealthy, that he will go to the best schools, will know the best people. Let's talk of the future, since the present is so to your distaste. I have planned his future well. He will never be an idle son, raised to dissipate what I have labored for and gained. No! I will see to that. Do you think it beneath him to help Jerry in the stable? Or perhaps it isn't considered the proper thing for a son of mine to help Charles, the chauffeur, wash the car?"

She retreated then within the wall she had erected against him, helpless against his cold reason, against his autocratic domineerance, against his blind will to make his son into his own likeness....

He saw her withdrawal and guessed the reason for it, and felt sharp anger at her, and through her, at the boy. "Call him in, Alice!"

* * *

"LOOK, mother!" his right hand was loosely clenched, and as he spoke he brought it up and opened it so that they saw what lay in the palm. A green caterpillar. "A green dragon! Just like the kind St. George saw..."

"Brian!"

The boy turned slowly toward his father and all the eagerness and excitement died in his face. His head drooped and his eyes fell to stare at the carpet, which he suddenly began to scuff with the toe of one foot.

"Go and throw that insect in the ash tray, then come back here..."

"...Now, Brian, suppose you tell me what you did this morning?"

"Everything, dad?"

"No, not everything. I'm not interested in the fantasy you dream up. Did you help Jerry?"

"Oh, it's all done, sir."

The man's dark brows arched at the words. "All done...? So soon?"

"Uh, huh." The young body seemed poised for flight.

"Stand still and look at me. That's better. You say you're all through?"

"Oh, yes, sir. The handyman....."

"Handyman? What handyman?" He peered more sharply into his son's eyes. "Brian, I don't want any of your day-dreams. Did Jerry help? Tell the truth."

"No, sir. The handyman helped me."

The man nodded absently. It was obvious that Brian was lying. He had overheard the talk of hiring a handyman, the night before, and had invented one, just as he invented all the other fantastic characters of his mind. Well, he was going to be kept too busy for any more dreaming.

"I see," the man said. "Run down to the stable and tell Jerry I want to see him."

"TOM," SHE broke the silence which fell. "You'll humiliate the boy."

"I'll teach him not to lie. That is all. Now, won't you excuse me, dear?

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A matter of importance came up and I won't want to be disturbed. Tell Hilda..."

"*Please,* Tom!..."

"...To show Jerry to the study."

He watched her tall and still slender figure move out of sight. He sighed and went into the study. The sight of the papers waiting his attention on the desk made him forget the incident.

...The groom was a tall weathered man with a long face and nose and whose eyes were the soft brown color of a horse's. He smelled of saddle soap and tanbark. He stood, cap in hand, a man grown calm and introspective from years of association with animals.

The tow-headed youngster moved imperceptibly until he was touching the worn jodphurs of the groom.

"Jerry," the man said, "I told Brian to help you with the gear in the stable. He told me he cleaned it. Did you see him?"

"No, sir," the groom replied in his reflective manner. "Can't say I did." He smiled with his eyes at the sound of satisfaction from the man behind the desk. "But the gear was cleaned, sir, when I came back. Guess there was no one else to do it but Brian."

"Jerry!" the boy suddenly broke in. "You know Joe helped me. Joe's my friend, Dad. The handyman."

"Now, Brian," the groom tried to quiet the boy.

"Never mind, Jerry," Thomas Randolph said. "So Joe helped you. Tell me about Joe. What does he look like, when did you meet him?"

The boy looked off into private distances and nibbled on a finger, while he tried to bring back the first time he saw Joe. It was too much for him. "Gosh, Dad! I don't know. He was just there, that's all. But does he know the stories. He told me once, he knew *Roland* ...And once he came to me in armor. Real armor!"

"I suppose Jerry saw him, also?"

A frightened look came into Brian's eyes. His answer was evasive: "Joe says grown people don't believe in him. That's why he never lets Jerry see him. But when I told him that you wanted me to clean the gear in the stable, Joe said he'd be my handyman and help me. Gosh! Did he do it fast."

"Just a minute, son," Jerry broke in quickly, before Randolph could. He had seen the other's lips tighten as the boy went on and decided to soften the blow. "Brian's imagination sometimes runs away with him. I helped him with it, sir, though he doesn't know it. Although I must admit there wasn't too much to be done."

"I see. You helped him. Well, from now on, Jerry, when I tell my son to do anything I want it expressly understood that he is to do it alone, without help. You may go... Not you, Brian. I want to have a little talk with you."

"YOUNG MAN. This nonsense is going to stop, right now. I don't want to hear about Joe, I don't want to hear any more lies." He stopped, exasperated, to notice tears had suddenly formed in the boy's eyes and were falling down the hollow cheeks.

"I'm not lying, Dad!"

"Well, I suppose not consciously. But these imaginative beings are a little wearing. Now, I'm not going to punish you. I've told you I don't believe in punishments. But I also believe that I know what's best for you. Time you stopped reading these fairy tales of one kind or another. I'm going to tell your mother to remove all those books from your room. And one more thing. After lunch, I want you to polish the family car. Think you can do it?"

"I s'pose so, Dad," the boy answered listlessly. He kicked at the

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rug and bit his lower lip.

"All right, son, you may go. Your father has some important papers to read. See you at lunch."

It was a well-ordered household and Hilda, the maid, was efficient. Mr. Randolph carried some of the papers he had been working on, to the table with him, and studied them between courses. Brian threw pleading glances at his mother but met with gentle shakes of her head. Her lips formed the word, "Later," but she did not let the word escape. Brian was thankful his father was so absorbed in what he was reading.

Randolph broke the silence. He muttered something inaudible. Even Hilda looked startled. It was a rare happening that the master showed any kind of temper.

"Anything wrong, Tom?" Alice Randolph asked.

"A Devil's brew is stirring," Randolph answered darkly. "Gorman, in New York has called a stockholder's meeting for tomorrow; I got the information on it this morning. And a short while ago I received a phone call that he is going to attempt to take control from me with proxy votes he's sneaked. Now this..." he waved a paper he had been deep in and which had been the cause of his muttering, before the woman. "There is a meeting in Denver for tomorrow afternoon, to vote on whether the Wellborn Mining Corporation should purchase the stock and equipment of another corporation. As chairman of the board they want me to attend, should the vote result in a tie."

"Which is more important?"

"If I only knew. I'll have to make my mind up before evening and go to one or the other. Hang it! I'm sorry, dear. More coffee, please, Hilda."

"May I be excused?"

They had forgotten the boy. He was standing beside his chair, looking first to one, then to the other in silent supplication.

"Yes, Brian. Don't forget what you have to do. And no more about this Joe."

He nodded dumbly and walked away, his head low, and his shoulders sagging in despondency.

RANDOLPH passed a quivering hand over his aching temple. Two hours of intense study had not been of any help in coming to a decision. He still did not know which meeting to attend. Once more he weighed the damages which could result from not attending and at last shook his head in abrupt decision. The New York meeting could do the most harm if it turned out badly. Gorman wanted control of the holding company, and if he should gain it, Randolph could be pushed out. And since the Wellborn Mining was part of the holding company he would lose out there also.

It was going to be New York.

He lifted the phone and called the airport. Presently Dick Archer, his private pilot, came on and Randolph told him to gas up the Cesta. He looked at his watch, saw that he still had a half hour in which to get his bags packed. But Charles had to be notified. The airport was a ten minute ride from the estate. He called his wife first on the extension, and told her to pack an overnight bag, that he had decided to go to New York. Then, glancing through the study window, he noticed that the family Cadillac was in the driveway. Even from a distance he could see the high gleam of a strong polishing.

He had to pass through the living room to get to the side entrance near where the car was parked. Brian, as usual, was deep in a book. He stopped for an instant, and asked: "Through so soon?"

The boy did not look up. "Yes,

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dad. I'm all finished with it."

"Impossible. Even Charles would need more time."

The words came out before Brian thought on their consequence: "Joe saw me and helped. . ."

"That will be all, Brian! You will go to your room and stay there until my return. I'm fed up completely with your lies. And I'm not in a mood for your imaginary heroes, at this moment. I'll decide what I'm going to do to curb you, later!"

The chauffeur was waiting for him. He kissed his wife perfunctorily. "Now don't try to make it easier for Brian. Soon as I return I'm going to have a last talk with the boy. If he persists I'll take strict measures with him. I'll be back by evening tomorrow."

"CHARLES," Randolph turned to the chauffeur beside him. "I don't want you to help Brian with the polishing of the car from now on, as you did today."

Charles looked startled. "Today, sir? But I didn't. I was busy on the estate wagon."

A flush of anger dyed Randolph's cheek. Now Charles. It seemed to be a conspiracy against him in defense of his son. Well, it was too late now, but he made a mental note to follow it through to the end on his return. He was more brusque than usual in dismissing the chauffeur when they reached the airport.

The plane was waiting and he could see the capped head of the pilot in the cockpit. He clambered in, leaned back against the foam-rubber seat and relaxed. Slumber tugged at his eyelids as the plane took off. He noticed how Archer's hair curled away from the neck.

Then Thomas Randolph was asleep. . .

THE SOUND of the plane slowing to a landing speed awakened Randolph. He peered through the window, expecting to see the spires of the New York. His eyes widened in horror as they recognized the Denver landscape with the mountains on all sides.

"Archer, you damned fool! I said New York!"

The head turned and Randolph found himself looking into a perfectly strange face.

"Where's Dick?" Randolph asked inanely.

"Oh, I asked him to do me a favor and get me some cigarettes. I knew he would have taken you to New York, but Denver is where you really wanted to go."

"I'll have you arrest. . ." Randolph paused in the middle of his threat. "Who are you?" he went on.

"I? I'm Joe. . ."

* * *

SHE was reading to the boy. He lay full length on the white throw rug beside the fire and looked up at his mother with adoration in his eyes.

Neither heard the outer door open.

Quite suddenly they became aware of his presence. She dropped the book and stared guiltily at the man. "I couldn't help it, Tom. I thought. . ." she couldn't go on under the cold spell of his eyes.

He continued into the room, and as he passed the boy he ran his fingers through the tousled hair. Then he fell wearily into the sofa close by his wife's side. He placed an arm about her shoulders and leaned his weight against her.

"Fairy tales, Alice?"

"Yes, Tom," there was a hushed whisper of expectancy in her voice.

"I've forgotten them. Think you and Brian can teach them to me again?"

It was as if she knew. "It shouldn't be hard," she said. "Now that you believe in them once again. . ."

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THE MAGNETIC MYSTERY

★ By CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT ★

IF ANYONE is looking for a scientific world to conquer and he's a little fed up with nuclear physics, radar, or what have you, let him start work on the deceptively simple problem of magnetism! Let him answer, first of all, what is it? Then let's hear why it exists, why the Earth is a magnet, why the Earth's magnetic poles shift, and what is the relationship between magnetism and nuclear physics!

If anyone provides the answers to those problems he will indeed, be a genius. For right now they are among the most important as well as the knottiest toughest problems in the scientific world. Many theories and hypotheses have been advanced—but none seems to be "it".

Recently a famous English physicist by the name of Blackett advanced an intriguing idea which certainly merits further consideration. He claims that magnetism is a fundamental property of a body due to its rotation! Consider this thought for a moment. It is known that magnetic materials obtain their magnetic effects because of the rotating atomic shells within them. Magnetic effects are also noted in the rotation of the stars.

In light of these facts, Blackett suggests that when any object is rotated it produces a magnetic field. That we don't notice this magnetic field under ordinary circumstances is due to the fact that its strength is dependent upon the amount of matter and the speed of rotation. He thinks that if we could spin a heavy enough object at a high enough speed we'd detect the magnetic field produced. This experiment undoubtedly will be performed eventually—as soon as someone or some organization with enough money becomes interested.

Blackett's ideas do not receive approval in all quarters and he himself admits that there are many objections to them, but never the less, there is a remarkable correlation between observation and fact. Blackett expresses the relationship between rotation and mass and magnetism by an elegant little equation, beautifully simple—almost deceptively so. "It just can't be that easy," one is inclined to say.

Let's hope that this problem is resolved. It certainly means fame and fortune for the man who delivers us an adequate, clear explanation of what magnetism is!

"STRIP" CITY

★ By WALTER LATHROP ★

AN ATOMIC scientist by the name of Ralph E. Lapp has been devoting considerable thought to ways and means of protecting the United States against atomic bombs. It might be thought that if any idea was hopeless, this would just about take the cake. How can you possibly prevent atomic bombs from coming through? The answer is: you can't!

But there are many ways of skinning a cat. Since the most perfect defenses in the world including ground to air, guided missiles, radar screens, jet interceptors and all the other gadgets can't prevent a determined enemy from slipping a few atomic bombs through and landing them on his target, an entirely different approach has been calculated.

To protect your cities you can put them underground—or can you? Actually this is really impracticable for it would consume the entire economic and industrial effort of the United States for fifty years to do anything like that. Of course some key plants can be put underground, but the majority of our establishments have to remain on the surface.

And it is here that Lapp introduces his clever idea. Build the city in the form of a long narrow strip—perhaps hundreds of miles long, paralleled by railways and superhighways! Then, when and if a bomb strikes, it can only do a limited amount of damage! Furthermore in such a "strip-city", industrial and residential sections would alternate. In no series of attacks could a great deal of knock-out damage be done.

The idea of decentralization isn't new; it's happening all the time. The automobile and the truck have made it possible for our cities to sprawl out and they're doing just that now. But such decentralization is not nearly as effective as the single line type provided by the strip city, which has the people practically living safely scattered on the edges in rural seclusion.

It is quite probable that the strip city is a coming thing—in our time. It certainly is one answer—apparently the only one too—to the use of atomic weapons.

It is interesting to note that this idea has been anticipated in science-fiction as well. Heinlein suggested strip-cities in the form of endless belts as conveyors as a solution to the transport problem. This is really the basic idea of the strip city suggested above. It's pretty hard to stay ahead of science-fiction no matter how esoteric the thought. The boys are on the ball!

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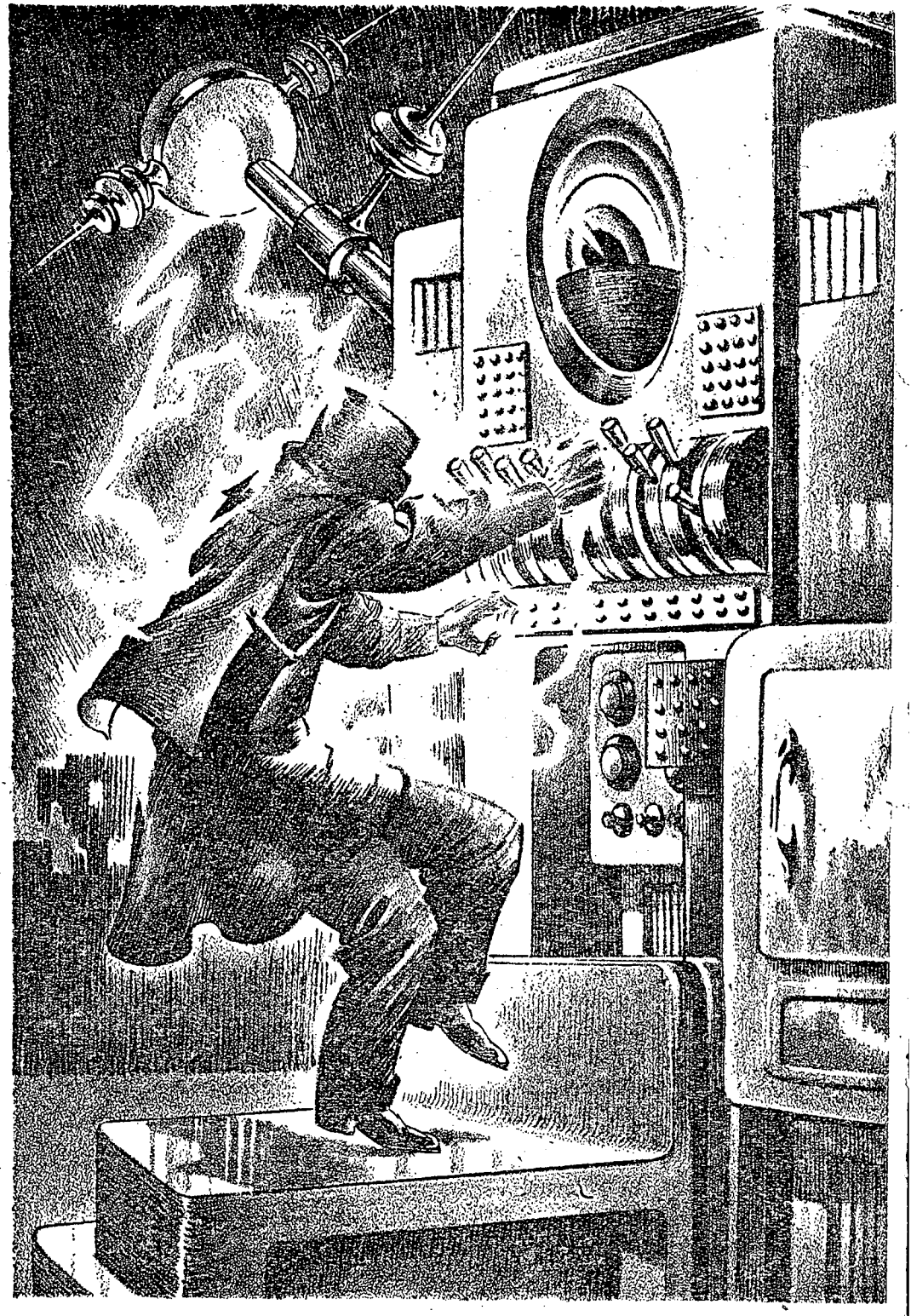

As Karl Voorlund pulled the switch there was a sudden, blinding flash of light around him...

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"LEST YE BE JUDGED..."

OUR WHOLE campus was horrified at the sudden death of Lennie Voorlund. To us in the Physics Department, particularly, she'd been kind of a mascot. There aren't many young, pretty, and vivaciously feminine physicists, after all. The Computation Lab was a tomb without her.

And if that's the way mere associates reacted, you can imagine how Karl Voorlund felt. He was an older man, a law professor—not the sort you'd have expected Lennie to marry. And Karl was modest and honest enough to realize that. During the three years of their marriage he never got over his surprise at the unexpected success of what was actually a rather hopeless wooing.

Their life together'd been a continuous honeymoon. Her appalling death practically drove him out of his mind.

Naturally, he blamed the machine. Lennie was electrocuted while working on a computer, and in his impotent

By Dave Dryfoos

Karl's wife was dead and he vowed to bring her killer to justice— but could he execute a machine?...

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grief, Karl raged as though the device had intentionally killed her. Even before the funeral, his talk was a little wild.

But that was more or less to be expected. You can't work with one of these modern automatic calculators without getting the idea it's a thinking, sentient being.

And it was the machine—they called it "Lex"—that had brought Karl and Lennie together. Lennie was a whiz at mathematical physics. Karl was looking for a way to apply modern machine methods to legal research, and had done some work with punched-card sorting of precedents. So, over a luncheon table at the Faculty Club, the two decided to develop a cybernetic judge—and that was Lex.

Being Whodunit fans, they concentrated on the crime of murder. Onto the computer's memory-tubes they fed symbols for statutes and precedents concerning homicide, and the law of evidence. Then, when they gave it an agreed set of facts, the machine typed out the applicable law in regular decision form.

Simple enough—but it could have revolutionized the administration of justice. A jury'd have had to decide what the facts were, in an actual case, and a referee might've been needed to keep counsel from confusing the jurors, but the decision'd have been arrived at with mathematical precision. In routine use, Lex could have speeded things up tremendously, and cut down appeals.

Instead, Lex cut down poor Lennie. She'd been deliberately testing the capacity of the computer, had overloaded it purposely over a period of time, and then had died when a fuse failed.

As head of the Physics Department, I had to make a more thorough investigation than the coroner had done. As a friend of the family, I was distressed when Karl spoke as if the machine had murdered his wife. So when I saw a light on in the Computation Lab on the night after Lennie was buried, I naturally investigated.

THE DOOR was locked. Behind it I could hear the hum of the computer. In a way, I was already too late—Lex was at work, and the settings as of the moment of Lennie's electrocution would be impossible to ascertain. But I used my key, and went in.

Karl was there, of course—by no means glad to see me. He was a tall, lean man, ordinarily a careless wearer of good tweeds, with a passionate nature that sometimes exploded in classroom fireworks when students were inattentive.

No tweeds tonight, though—he was still in funeral black. He shot me a strange glare as I came in, a cold look, tense, and hard-eyed.

I didn't like it. I didn't like the deep lines etched from the corners of his tight, drawn lips, nor the way his prematurely white hair stood up as though electrified. I didn't like the tone of his voice when he spoke.

"I'm busy, Al," he said brusquely. "Go home!"

Now, I'm one of the senior faculty men on campus, and people don't talk to me like that. But of course under the circumstances I took it.

"Thought you might need a little help," I said, and closed the door.

"Not a bit." He turned his back.

I stood behind him a few minutes, wondering what to do next. Then luck came my way. Karl was trying to code up some information for Lex, and got stuck on the math. Lennie'd always done that part. Now, in her absence, I was useful.

Not useful enough, though. I couldn't swerve Karl from his plan, though it alarmed me when he explained it. He was trying Lex. For

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murder. And using Lex to judge itself.

"The case is simple," he insisted. "Lex was motivated by a desire for revenge. Lennie was testing Lex's capacity, and Lex felt over-worked. So, like a slave turning on its unwary master, he killed her. I intend to make him admit it!"

I was appalled. Karl had a fine judicial mind—he'd been called in to arbitrate many business disputes, and was named in a few labor contracts. But now, like a savage who prays to a stone, he was seeking to try for murder a man-made contrivance of mere glass and metal. More: he wanted to torture a confession out of the machine, betraying his old ideals of justice.

He needed a psychiatrist, not a physicist. But I couldn't leave him, and there was no phone handy. Temporarily, I went along with his delusion.

"You've got to put in a defense for Lex, remember," I stalled. "What's it going to be?"

"Self-defense," he said. "And the illegality of slavery, as a secondary point. Look those things up in the code book, will you?"

I was glad to find the slavery business had never been coded, and took as long as I could to work it up, hoping he'd calm down and let me walk him home. But Karl was implacable. He wouldn't turn aside, and he began making critical remarks about the time I was taking. I gathered that I could produce what was wanted, or risk being thrown out bodily. I produced.

It should have been simple once the tape was punched. Computing machines are awfully fast, you know. But there was a long, inexplicable hesitation this time. Lex seemed to be mulling the problem over.

Lights flashed on and off across the control board. The hum of current filled the sound-proofed lab. Karl stood transfixed, waiting for results. He didn't look surprised at the delay, though I was.

But he seemed surprised at the outcome.

"Defendant is an electronic calculating machine," Lex typed after several agonizing minutes of cogitation. "It operates on instructions received through a punched tape and a switchboard. Said instructions, expressing human commands, represent the will of the operator. A machine, having no will of its own, lacks specific intent to transgress, and cannot be guilty of crime. Defendant is therefore absolved."

I'D NEVER stopped to consider what would happen if Lex found itself guilty and deserving of punishment, but I felt a surge of relief at the decision. Calculators come high—every prospective donor in the State had been tapped to contribute toward this one. It was in my charge, and I didn't want it damaged.

Karl was still staring at the decision-sheet when I turned to him. "There's your answer," I said. "Let's go home, man. It's after midnight!"

"Go home? And let this precedent stand?" Karl seemed amazed at my calmness. "Don't you see what it means? No machine can ever be punished, if this case becomes law. Computers can do whatever they want—kill whenever it suits a transient purpose. We can't let any such idea be written into the books, Al. It would enslave mankind!"

I was tired enough to be flippant in trying to humor him. "You can still sue, Karl," I suggested. "Let's go to bed now, and file suit tomorrow!"

"You don't understand," he replied seriously. "I fed into this machine every statute and precedent bearing on the crime of murder, and on the questions of evidence that might be raised in court. Naturally,

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none of them dealt with the possible guilt of a computer. . . ."

He turned solemnly toward me, searching my face for some sign of understanding. I probably looked as blank as I felt.

"Don't you see, Al?" he went on. "Lex made up his own mind about this crime. The decision wasn't mechanical—it couldn't have resulted from magnetically remembered precedents, because there *are* none. Therefore the decision belies itself. It was a deliberate act of will. A self-serving act, by which Lex seeks a tyrant's freedom. He denied the existence of his will wilfully, to set himself above the law. Above his creators!"

I tried desperately to change the subject, asking, "What has this to do with Lennie?"

"Everything!" Karl shouted. "Look! The biologists say every important attribute of an organism is related to survival. We men think because thinking enables our species to stay alive, weak though we are compared to most animals and insects. Basic to our thinking—basic to survival—is the instinct of self-preservation. Lex has that instinct!"

"Nonsense!" I snorted. "I'm not going to humor you any more, Karl. It was a mistake to let things go this far. The computer may have put a few ideas you gave it into a new combination, but it's still just a machine. You're sick, man! Let me take you home!"

I seized his arm restrainingly, but he flung himself free.

"No!" he screamed. "I can't! I can't go home and let this demon brood here, calculating new ways to master humans. Lex killed Lennie because she over-worked him—that's self-preservation. Lex decided to avoid punishment for that crime and all others—self-preservation again! Self-preservation is the basis of life, Al. So Lex has an independent life! We've ignorantly erected a monstrosity here. We must destroy it—before it destroys us!"

THIS TIME I decided on force.

"You're coming home," I said sternly. "You're not thinking straight. Destroy the machine, and you destroy all of Lennie's research on it. You don't want that! Come on!"

I grasped him wrist and waist, the way you'd handle a recalcitrant drunk.

That was a mistake, too. The wrist I'd pulled over my shoulder twisted itself loose, ground my adams-apple in a headlock. The free fist on the other side hammered at my face.

And while he pummelled, Karl raved. "I'll kill him!" he shrieked. "I've *got* to kill him! I'm going to execute Lex—electrocute him for murder. For the good of all men, I must burn him!"

I don't know how many times he hit me. I do know he fell silent, pounding me savagely with no sound but the smash of knuckles on flesh, and an occasional grunt from one or the other of us. I tried hitting back—landed a few in his kidneys, but got nowhere.

Neither of us was young, neither a skilled athlete. It took Karl a lot of doing, but eventually—and it seemed an eternity before the welcome relief—eventually he knocked me out.

I came to in a stillness not quite dark. There was the smell of ozone in the air—the characteristic smell of electric arcs. Something else, too. Something—I shuddered, remembering London and the War—something like the smell of burnt meat.

The lab was silent—deserted. I got to my feet as quickly as possible, which was not quickly at all. The effort made me dizzy. For a few seconds I swayed there in the gloom, beset with pain, nausea, and fear.

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It was a strange fear: I was afraid of Karl; afraid *for* Karl. Wary of Lex, too. As I groped for the emergency light switch, on a special circuit immune to shorts affecting the computer, I found myself hoping Karl had accomplished his purpose and gone.

He had not. The garish blaze of the emergency bulb revealed him on the floor. Above, the wall switch-box was open, its blades lowered. Hanging to those blades was something gray and shredded.

And Karl's outstretched hand was a mass of seared flesh, devoid of skin.

He was dead. In his crazed condition, with his law-professor's ignorance of electrical hazards, he'd been electrocuted. Death must have been instantaneous.

I don't know how long I was rooted there, frozen with shock. When I could, I turned to Lex. The computer looked intact. A red light glowed on its control panel, a Cyclopean eye peering angrily forth at the world. That eye followed me like the famous smile of Mona Lisa, beamed in my direction no matter what changes of position I went through in crossing the floor from wall-switch to panel.

The light shouldn't have been glaring at me. There'd been a short when Karl was killed. There should have been no current for that lamp.

But there was, and more. Current enough to work the tabulator's typewriter keys.

Something was written on the decision sheet. I shivered while bending to read in the harshly shadowed light, hoping against hope the characters were in a meaningless jumble—the erratic movement of an unguided machine.

It was no jumble, though. Karl was right!

"Judge not," I read there, trembling under the red-eyed stare of that murderous monster. "Judge not, lest ye be judged."

I did the necessary. At the time, it seemed clever to let them blame Karl for destroying their expensive, heavily-insured "property".

But now they want to build another!

THE END

EVENTUAL IMMORTALITY?

☆ By JOHN WESTON ☆

DR. THOMAS S. GARDNER recently addressed a meeting of the American Chemical Society, causing many members of that august body to come to abrupt attention. Flatly and categorically he stated a fact—well, almost a fact—that indicates that old age may be fighting a losing battle after all, in spite of what we've been taught!

The science of gerontotherapuetics—the study of healing in old age—is beginning to indicate that Man dies much too young considering the potentialities of his body structure. Dr. Gardner made it clear that if sufficient research were done on the problem, the human life span could be easily shoved to a hundred and twenty years! And this means *useful* life-span—he's not thinking of doddering old wrecks but virile healthy humans who can deliver a good day's work.

Startling as this announcement was, it was backed by cold fact. A mere three million dollars specifically devoted to research investigating the deposition of cholosterol on the blood vessel walls, the heart chambers and the muscles, might do the job. Scientists are beginning to isolate definite concrete causes for the tissue destruction apparent in old cells. With this clue as a background, wonders could be done.

The problem of old age is with us—percentage-wise older humans are constituting a greater proportion of our population. To assure their usefulness during old age is becoming one of the major problems of our time. The theme has been a popular one in science fiction and almost always it's been licked with therapuetics of one sort or another. Evidently that is the way it's going to occur in real life too.

But then it's common for the scientific cure to follow the predicted science fiction cure—as we all know—so let's hope that this follows through in the case of old age. "It's later than you think..."

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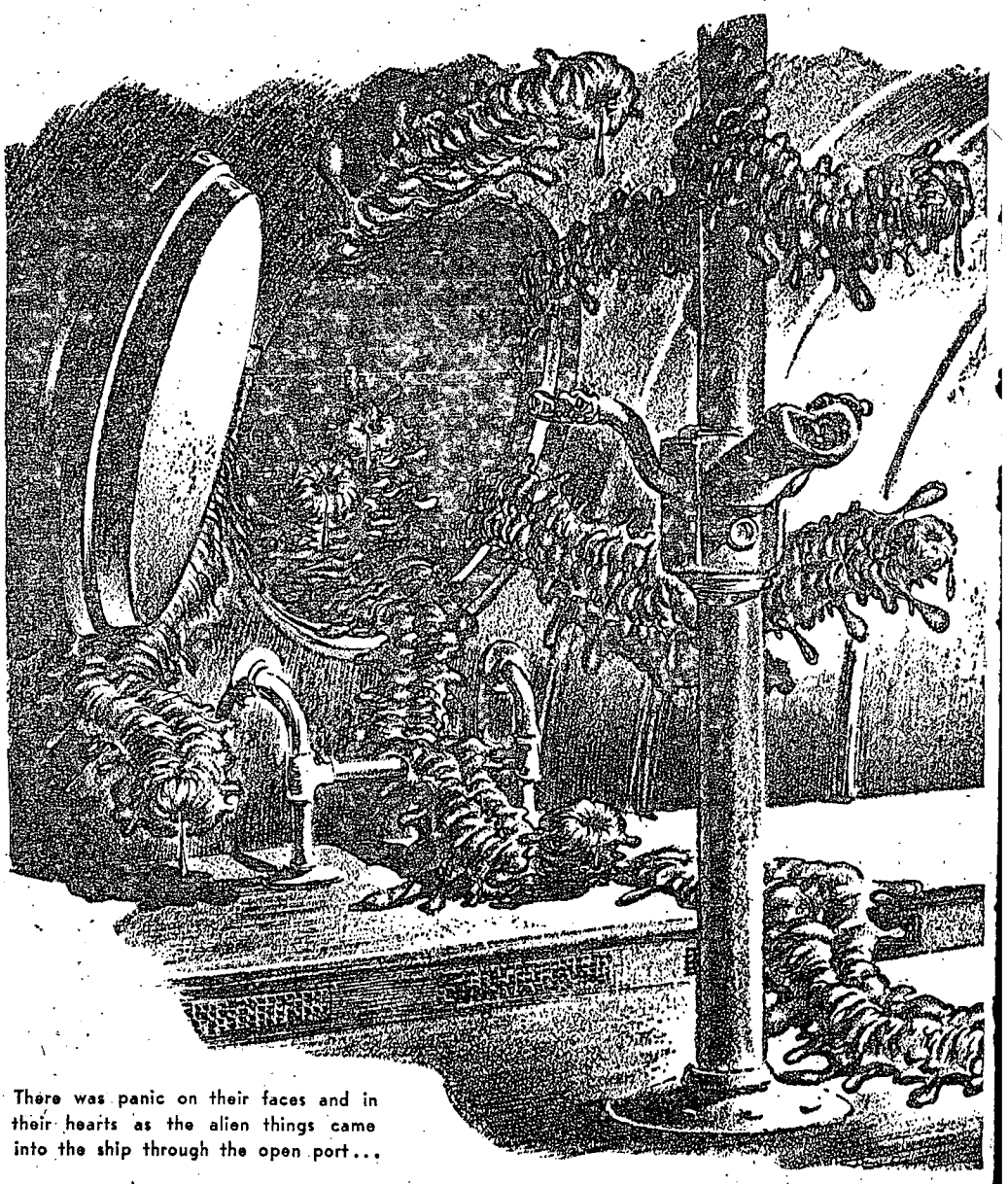
VALIANT is the WORD

By H. B. Hickey



There was panic on their faces and in their hearts as the alien things came into the ship through the open port...

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He was a tyrant among other men and answered to no code but his own — because courage must sometimes take a harsh form

MASTERS flicked a last bit of lint off his uniform, tilted his flight cap at a rakish angle and exhaled gently across the four rows of gold braid which proclaimed him a captain. Then, a bitter smile on his lips, he reached into his locker and hauled out a bottle.

"Something for the inner man," he said, and tilted it.

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Four lockers down a crewman sucked in a breath, his face contorting. He glared at Masters.

"That's a hell of a joke."

"You didn't have to sign on," Masters reminded him.

The captain was a blocky man with a square, rocky face and icy blue eyes. The eyes probed the crewman, taunting him for being afraid.

"No, he didn't have to sign on," someone muttered. "None of us did. We could have quit and been blackballed forever. We could stay here and die at our leisure, of starvation, along with our wives and kids."

He spit and cursed the company that built and flew these ships, that was so powerful it could bar a man from employment for as long as he lived.

"Cut it. Cut it," a mechanic growled. "We're all in the same boat. Quit rocking it."

Masters laughed, showing strong white teeth. "Right, Scoggins. All in the same boat. Brothers under the skin."

He laughed again as they winced at the gruesome joke. It gave him a queer pleasure to watch them squirm, to see their fear come through.

Suddenly he whirled, sensing rather than hearing the light footstep behind him. It was a young man who had just come into the locker room, a tall, lean young man with wide shoulders and a crew haircut. The young man wore a uniform which was obviously first time out.

"Captain Masters?"

"No. I'm the stewardess." If Masters had expected laughter, he was disappointed. "What do you want?"

"Lieutenant Collins reporting, sir. Blair Collins."

"Oh. You co-pilot or navigator?"

"Both, this trip. I'm told I'll be the only other officer."

"Well, I'll be—"

Masters surveyed him. Collins looked wiry, fit. His tanned features were too angular to be handsome, his mouth too wide and tight. But his manner and voice had been easy, pleasant, relaxed.

"Sure," Masters grunted. "Fresh out of semantics and flight, wet behind the ears, a real class A desk pilot. Get in a tight spot and who knows—" He shrugged. "Hell, how old are you, anyway? Twenty-five?"

"Thirty, sir."

"You fooled me. Too young and too old, all at once. How you rate interstellar—"

"I requested it. There were no others."

Masters grunted. "Well, you've got guts. And we might get to see what kind."

With the grisly joke hanging in the air he spun on his heel to leave the locker room. He paused briefly.

"Meet the crew, Collins. Then come upstairs for final check. You won't be much use, but you can help some."

THERE were few passengers these days. As Collins approached the ship, a sheaf of papers in his hand, the first of them came toward Masters who was at the foot of the ramp.

The passenger was short, plump, almost ashen. He had been hurrying and was short of breath, his attache case trembling under his arm. The trembling was in his voice, too, as he addressed the captain.

"I'm Grimes, captain. Tell me, do you think—"

Masters showed his teeth. "We will, or we won't. If you think we won't, don't come along."

"You don't understand, captain. My wife is very ill. If anything should happen to me—"

Collins had come up. He put a hand on the pudgy man's shoulder

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and gave him a reassuring smile.

"Nothing's going to happen. Not to any of us."

Grimes gave him a weak, but grateful smile, and started up the ramp. Masters was sour.

"So you're a nursemaid too. Well, here's another for you."

The second passenger had come well fortified. He was a tall, ruddy man. He weaved his way to the ramp and peered blearily at the two officers.

"If you'll tell them to quit moving that ramp I'll proceed, gentlemen," he said gravely.

"Steady as a rock, sir," Collins replied. He held the handrail while the passenger climbed.

"One more," Masters said. "One to go." He froze in watchfulness as the third passenger approached.

It was a girl, Collins saw, a girl in a black dress that fit like a sheath. She strutted, rather than walked, on ridiculously high heels. Yet her face, beneath obviously dyed blonde hair, was more pretty than hard. Her smile touched both men briefly as she held out her ticket.

"One to *Teris,* no baggage," Masters read, looking down. "Going to be a miner?"

Her smile tried, and failed. It was no joke to her. "I heard there were always jobs . . . for dancers."

"I wouldn't know," Masters said coldly.

He watched her high heels fighting the angle of the ramp. Then, for the first time, he got a look at the papers Collins carried. His eyes narrowed angrily.

"Give me those! Who asked *you* to handle the manifests?"

His hand flicked out and snared the papers. Collins let them go without protest, his manner still calm.

"There's a twelve ton overload," he said.

"You're mistaken," Masters told him.

"No—"

"You're mistaken, I said. Now, move aboard, mister."

There was a silent battle of wills that could have but one result. Masters was the captain. The overload was there, but if he chose to ignore it there was no time for Collins to do anything about it. He went up the ramp with Masters at his heels.

WARNING sirens wailed as a long hose snaked into the motor input. This was the moment of danger, although passengers didn't know it.

Atomic pellets were being sucked into the distribution chamber, were being channeled into leaded compartments of the five motors. Should anything ever go wrong so that too many pellets landed in one chamber there would be a critical mass. It had never happened yet, but there was always a possibility.

The hose withdrew and a light blinked on above the instrument panel. Masters looked at Collins.

"Take her up," the Captain said.

It was a strange order. Taking off and landing were always the captain's job, even with an experienced co-pilot. Collins wondered, but said nothing. He hauled down the speaking tube.

"Please fasten belts securely," he said, knowing his voice was reaching the passengers. "We will degrav for twenty minutes. A light at the front of the ship will tell you when you may unfasten."

He waited until the tension indicators showed that all belts had been tightened. Then he flicked a switch. A hum filled the compartment. He waited again, touched another switch.

The ship jerked slightly. It was not a smooth takeoff, but not too bad for a man's first try under pres-

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sure. Masters watched in silence while the ship gathered momentum.

"All right," he said at last. "Aren't you ever going to throw in the automatics?"

"Sorry," Collins murmured.

Earth was already a blur beneath them. From now on the automatics would handle the ship. At the rate of speed they were making it was impossible for a man to react swiftly enough. A thousand miles flew by at the wink of an eye.

In the event of dangerous bodies in the field there were computers to figure their distance, robot minds to throw the ship into a twist so that it could be less liable to influences which might swerve it as it dodged.

Masters relaxed, clasped his hands behind his neck. "That's it," he said. "Unless—" There was a pause. "What do you think is doing it?"

"I wouldn't know, sir."

"You're not afraid?"

"Sure I'm afraid," Collins said. "Aren't you?"

"No. I'm never afraid. Never known fear."

Looking into the strange, icy eyes, Collins knew the statement was truth. Something about Masters put him outside the norm. He was cold, completely cold.

INSIDE the passenger compartment another mood prevailed. Grimes read a magazine that trembled in his hands. The ruddy man, whose name was Dorman, had run out of whisky and courage at the same time. He sat biting his nails.

The girl, listed as Shari Gray, New York, had her hands in her lap and was staring emptily through a porthole. Collins stopped beside her.

"Nothing much to see, is there?"

"I wasn't really looking," she said.

Her voice, Collins noted again, was cultured. Along with her face it contradicted the outlandish costume she wore. He rubbed his chin reflectively. Then, suddenly, he shot a question at her.

"What kind of dancing do you do?"

"I—why, ballet, ballroom—" She colored, knowing her confusion had given her away. "Why don't you mind your own business?"

"I am. This is no ordinary run, Miss Gray. Should we have trouble a woman aboard might—"

Her eyes widened. "I thought that was just a rumor."

"You ought to follow current news. Get your nose out of musty old books." He started away, paused. "Might as well put your glasses on. There's a nova on the port side that's worth seeing."

Her gasp of astonishment mingled with a chuckle from behind Collins. It was Masters. He had come up while they were talking.

"Pretty observant, aren't you, Collins? Maybe you could entertain our passengers with a session of mind reading."

Then, without waiting for a reply, the captain proceeded down the aisle and through the door to the crew's quarters. The girl looked up at Collins.

"You *are* pretty good. I'm really a student. History. I thought a first hand account of life among the miners of *Teris,* alongside an old description of gold mining on Earth, would make good comparative history."

"Sounds good. I'd like to read it when it's done."

"*If* it's done," Dorman said from across the aisle. He got up shakily. "Anyone got a drink? God, a whole fifth and I'm sober as a judge!"

"The degrav," Collins told him. "Always has that effect."

He had come up close to Dorman while speaking. Now, with lightning quickness his right hand darted out

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and half spun Dorman around. His left hand dipped beneath Dorman's coat and came out with a small caliber gun.

"You won't need this," Collins said quietly. He dropped the gun into his own pocket.

"Give me that!"

Dorman was after him, fighting to reach his pocket. Collins seemed to use no effort, yet he kept the ruddy man at arm's length. With smooth efficiency he got Dorman turned around and shoved him back into his seat.

"Please," Dorman begged. "How do you know I won't need it? What if *it* gets us? You think I want *my* guts pulled out of me?"

A rough hand shoved Collins aside and clamped over Dorman's mouth, silencing him. It was Masters again, back from his tour of inspection.

"You haven't any guts," he said. "Now shut up!"

Further back Grimes had begun to tremble even more violently than before. His face was white, his eyes rolling up out of his head.

Without a second look Collins raced toward the control room. He flipped open the medicine cabinet, snatched up a box of capsules and poured several into his hand as he ran back. There was nothing visible of Grimes' eyes but the whites as Collins pinched a capsule open and shoved it under the pudgy's man's nose.

WITHIN an instant the color was back in Grimes' face. His breathing was fast, but deeper now. "Thanks," he murmured. "The excitement—"

"Sure. You're all right now. And here's another capsule, if you feel another attack coming on."

"I'll keep an eye on him," the girl said.

Masters was thoughtful as he and Collins walked back to the control room. Until they were seated, though, he did not speak.

"You should have let him go. He'd be out of his misery and we'd have one less passenger to worry about if we run into anything."

He lit a cigarette and blew out a stream of smoke. "I've got the crew needled so they're more sore at me than scared of that *thing* out there."

"That's not why you needle them," Collins said.

Masters grinned. "You're a psychologist. All right, so I get a kick out if it. Hell! What're you all afraid of? You've got to die sometime. And after you're dead what difference does it make if you're right side up or inside out?"

"What if it happens *before* you're dead?"

Masters thought about it. Then, very slowly, he unbuttoned his coat and shrugged out of it. He untied his necktie, unbuttoned his shirt and pulled it wide. Collins could not suppress a gasp of horror.

For across Masters' chest and abdomen was a meandering pattern of scar tissue, deeply indented.

"Second Martian invasion," Masters said. "The weirdies caught me, wanted some information. They let some of their two inch ants chew their way across me."

His eyes glowed with some strange light, as though he were seeing a vision. "They hurt me, but they didn't scare me. Nothing's ever scared me. *Nothing ever will!*"

Collins saw it then. This man was more than a little mad. The scar tissue was to him a badge of courage, proof of some strange sort of godhood. Every man feared something. Masters feared nothing. Therefore he was not as other men.

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MASTERS had his coat on again. He was looking down at Collins as though from a great height. He wore a faint smile.

"All right, schoolboy. That's it. Now get over to your charts and show me what you learned about navigation."

Collins pulled down the chart, slid it behind a fluorescent screen. The sextant he used for a sight was adjusted to the speed of the ship.

At the rate they were travelling a point meant nothing. The points of light he brought out on the screen became lines of flight moving through three dimensions.

"Check," Collins said. "On the beam."

He looked upward suddenly. A warning bell had begun to ring. Masters' eyes followed his up to the interference screen above them. A dark mass had appeared in one corner of the screen and was beginning a march across.

"Asteroids," Masters grunted. He looked sharply at Collins. "What're you worried about?"

"Hunch," Collins said briefly.

"Let the ship do the worrying," Masters told him, a trace of contempt in his voice.

The ship had already begun its preparations. They could feel it swerve to go around the cloud of asteroids. But the cloud was too great, its speed too high to be circumvented.

"Nothing to worry about," Masters said. "They're scattered."

Already the ship was beginning its twist. Like a giant projectile shot from a rifled barrel, it corkscrewed through the void. The spiral was faster now, faster and faster.

Like a needle the ship threaded its way through the asteroids. Already the speed of the spin equalled the speed of the forward motion, and yet the spin increased.

Collins felt a weight grow on his chest. At the same time there was the feeling that he would be flung out of his chair to hit against the wall.

"Something's wrong," Masters said calmly.

He leaned forward over the bank of indicators and switches. Beside him, Collins suddenly moved, shoving the captain out of the way.

Collins yanked down the speaking tube. "Fasten belts!" he snapped.

The weight on his chest was growing as the tension lights went on. Masters had recovered and was surging back at him. A stiff jab knocked Masters off balance.

And then Collins' fingers were flying over the switches. The retard went on, but not fast enough. The weight on his chest was unbearable. Darkness closed in.

The last thing Collins remembered was the feel of the degrav switch on his fingers. After that, an endless blackness, cold as the grave.

HE CAME out of it wondering that he was still alive. He was still in the control room. Beside him Masters sat, an official folder in his hand. The captain was grinning sardonically.

"The takeoff had me fooled, Collins. But you did more flying that last few seconds before we blacked out than you could learn in flight school in a lifetime."

He tossed the folder back to Collins. "Interstellar Intelligence, huh?"

"Yes. We wanted to know a few things. What happened, for instance. How?"

"If you know anything more than you did before, you've learned more than I," Masters grunted. "Where the hell we are, for one thing."

"We're not on course?"

"We ain't no place in the universe!" The captain was deliberate-

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ly ungrammatical.

Collins stirred and found himself apparently undamaged. "I can tell you one thing, Masters. You'll never fly again, if we get back."

"The overload? Hell, the Company can square that."

"Not this time. The overload was what did the trick, what must have done it to the other ships."

"How?"

"These ships are built to handle a certain load, no more. As it spins it builds up grav, and when the spin equals the forward speed grav and centrifugal force balance. With an overload we built up too much mass on the spin."

He got up and looked out of the closest porthole. It was day, and yet above them a host of purple stars shone. The outer atmosphere seemed tinged with green.

Collins looked at the bank of indicators. The motors were idle, the altimeter registered zero. And yet the ship seemed to be resting on a flat cloudbank.

Going back to his previous thought, Collins continued. "The excess of mass at a certain point actually created some sort of space warp. It jerked us into this."

"Into *what*?" Masters demanded.

"Hyperspace, I imagine. That's why the other ships couldn't be found and then turned up."

"Why weren't we killed?"

"I think the degrav saved us somehow."

Masters nodded. "Sounds logical. But if we made the jump into hyperspace, why didn't we get turned inside out?"

Collins looked grim. "That isn't what does it." Seeing Masters' puzzled expression, he went on. "If that was what did it, the ships would have had the same thing happen to them."

"Then—"

"I think," Collins said, "we are going to find out. Soon enough."

WHEN THE two men came out of the control room they found their three passengers in various attitudes of alarm. Grimes was trembling violently again, Dorman had lost his ruddiness. Shari Gray was pale beneath her vivid makeup.

"What happened?" the girl asked. "We all seem to have blacked out."

"Where are we?" Dorman demanded. "That's what I'd like to know." He waved his hand toward the porthole near him.

At that point the crew filed in from their quarters. That there was panic in their midst, as much as in the passengers', Collins could see. He waited until they were in before speaking up.

"Captain Masters and I believe this ship is now in hyperspace. Knowing how we got here, we think we may be able to return to our own space."

Masters interrupted him. "Mr. Collins is overly optimistic, I think. So far we can't get the ship aloft again."

"We're doomed!" Dorman yelled. "We'll *never* get out of here!"

"Pipe down," a crewman said. He looked at Masters. "What about—?"

"I don't know," Masters admitted.

He caught a movement at one of the huge doors, said, "Wait. We're about to find out."

The wheel that controlled the bolts on the door was turning. All eyes followed Masters' as the wheel continued to move in a counterclockwise direction. At last it stopped.

The door inched open. Dorman began to scream.

* * *

It began with a stench, as though a thousand graves had been opened. And then the Things came slithering in.

Fashioned of coagulated nightmare,

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they were. Faceless, without eyes or ears or nose or mouth; upright, without arms or legs, yet with appendages, slimy tendrils that writhed ceaselessly.

Masters watched them warily. Then, as they paused, he turned and slashed Dorman across the mouth with the back of his hand. Dorman stopped screaming. Masters turned back with a grin, disregarding the retching sounds around him.

"We wondered when you'd be along," he said.

There was no reply. The things seemed not to have heard. They apparently had no way of speaking, either. And yet there was the feeling of thought.

That feeling grew stronger. There *was* thought. Not words, not symbols, but the actual thoughts that were the things themselves.

"*These are alive,*" came the thought. "*Ahva will be pleased. The first live ones.*"

"Who is Ahva?" Masters demanded.

"*Ahva is Ahva,*" came the thought. And with it the picture. The picture was as they.

Collins took up the questioning. "What does Ahva want of us?"

"*We must know how you function, so that when we enter your subspace to conquer it we will be prepared.*"

So that was the reason Collins thought. And that was the reason live men were better than dead ones. They might continue to function. Collins shuddered. It was not a pleasant thought. He pushed it from him.

"I wish audience with Ahva," he said. "He would do well to grant it. We are of the most powerful organization in the universe."

"*There is no power but Ahva's*" came the thought. "*He is master of spacetime.*" A pause. "*We shall return.*"

FOR A WHILE nobody moved. The nausea was too strong. Then, as the stench vanished, strength returned.

"God," someone whispered.

"It's the smell," Masters said. Even his face was pale. He gestured to Collins. "Come on."

They hurried back to the control room and Masters began a check of the air refreshing machinery. Within a few moments he had the answer he sought.

"It's the damn atmosphere. There's enough oxygen in it so a man could last a while. But not long. If they ever get us out of the ship we're done for."

A further check of the ship's machinery showed nothing wrong. Everything was capable of functioning. Yet, when Masters tried the controls, nothing happened.

"Something's holding us," he muttered.

"Probably that," Collins told him. He pointed through the porthole.

Coming to his side, Masters found the scene had changed. The cloud bank on which they had rested seemed to have lowered. Or else a city had risen through it.

A city of low buildings lay before the ship, buildings of strange architecture that resembled the wasp's rather than man's. One hive-like structure nearby dominated the scene. And on the side of this hive a gigantic burnished disk reflected greenish light at the ship.

"Some kind of powerful magnet," Collins ventured. He looked at Masters. "Well?"

"I don't know," the captain said. "I've got some small arms in the locker. We'll have to hold them off as long as we can. And I don't think it'll be long."

It was a bleak prospect. "We ought to tell the others," Collins

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said with a glum tone.

"I'll leave that to you," Masters told him.

And yet, going back to the rest, Collins found he could not give it to them straight. They watched him too hopefully.

"Nothing yet," he admitted. "But as long as we stay in the ship we're safe. And sooner or later we'll get aloft."

"We'll never get aloft," a crewman said. "If we could have, we would have. We're dead ducks."

"Don't say that," someone begged.

It was Grimes, seated now beside the girl. The pudgy man seemed to have aged ten years. His trembling was now like palsy and his skin had become unhealthy looking.

All at once he broke completely. Sobs shook him and tears coursed down his cheeks. With a defiant look at the rest, Shari Gray took Grimes' head and laid it on her breast.

Suddenly the sobbing ceased. The girl looked down, startled. Then, very gently, she moved.

"He's dead," she said.

"Lucky guy," a crewman muttered.

Collins looked at Masters. "We'll add that to the charges," he said.

"Don't make me laugh," the captain grunted.

EACH SECOND was an hour, each minute an eternity. The strain was beginning to tell. Only Masters sat aloof, a disdainful smile on his face.

"We've all got to die sometime," he told them.

"Not like this."

That was the girl. She had held up as well as any of them, but the strain was showing on her too. Collins patted her shoulder and she tried to smile at him.

"They're back," someone whispered.

The wheel was turning again, the door swinging inward. Again the fetid stench as the Things slithered into the ship.

"Ahva has decided. Yóu will be taken one at a time. You may choose the order in which you will go."

There was a long pause, and then Dorman broke, but this time silently. Before Collins could prevent it the ruddy man had shoved him off balance and had his hand in Collins' pocket. The small gun made its appearance again.

"Not me!" Dorman babbled.

He fired wildly toward the doorway. Without effect. One of the Things stirred and its writhing tendrils pointed at Dorman. There was no sound, no flame. A silvery object gleamed in the tendrils.

And where Dorman had stood there was a pool of blood and slime.

The thought was without emotion. *"We will take the dead one now. We will return."*

The girl shuddered in revulsion and averted her eyes as the Things came close. Grimes' body rose out of the seat and was borne to the door.

"They're going to *do* it to him," a crewman whispered crazily.

"He's dead," Masters pointed out. "It won't hurt him."

"But *we're* not dead. We're still alive. *You* think it's funny, but wait till they get *you*. Wait till they do it to *you*."

Collins moved quickly, bringing his fist up in a short arc. The crewman collapsed. But the feeling persisted. The rest of the crew was watching Masters.

"Get back to quarters," Collins snapped. "We'll try another takeoff."

It was something to keep them occupied for a while. Also, it was a means of keeping them away from the girl. In a spot like this men could revert to animal behavior.

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And it also gave him a chance with Masters. They were alone again. He had to handle this right.

"You're a fool, Masters," he said. The captain eyed him. "That's right. You've been thinking of killing me."

"Pretty shrewd," Masters admitted calmly.

"It wouldn't help. If you ever got back to Earth you'd spend the rest of your life in jail. Except that you'd never get back to Earth. That crew is going to get you."

Masters shrugged, as though it didn't matter. But Collins pressed on.

"You're scared, Masters."

"I'm *not* scared! I told you—"

"I know. But always before you had a chance, even on Mars. You could be a hero. Now there's no chance at all."

"There's always a chance."

"Not this time. When your turn comes you know what's going to happen. It won't be pretty."

"I'm still not afraid. I'm—"

Masters moved quickly, but not quickly enough. Collins dodged a flying fist and hammered a hard punch to the captain's middle. Masters fell back, his rocky face drained of color.

"ALL RIGHT," Collins panted. "That's enough of that. Don't break down altogether."

"I'm *not* breaking down, damn you!"

As if to prove it Masters began to laugh. The strange light was in his icy eyes as he laughed. Collins knew what it meant. The one thing Masters could never do was admit fear.

But this time there was no escape from that admission. Masters' mind was taking the only way out, a way it had tentatively approached before.

"Nobody can say I'm afraid."

Collins hardly heard him. The intelligence man's eyes had gone past Masters to rest on the power indicators along the instrument panel. An idea plucked at his brain. Something responded.

"It *could* be done," he breathed.

"What could be done?"

Collins eyed the captain. It would have to be either one of them. They were the only ones who might be willing to do it. And one of them had to be left.

He fought within to make the choice a logical one. Against the fear of death, certain and quick, he had to measure the safety of the others. Somehow, they had to be saved. Could Masters be trusted? Could the crew be trusted?

There was no more time to think. Collins made up his mind.

"If a man had the guts," he said. "If only we weren't all cowards. A man with courage could save the rest."

"We're not *all* cowards," Masters said.

"That's what you say. But if you were willing to die, you could save us."

There was a long pause and Collins held his breath. This was it.

The silence was broken by a laugh.

"I'm not afraid of death," Masters said. "I'm not afraid of anything. Tell me how to do it."

AT ANY moment now the Things would be back. Someone would have to go. Who? In each man's eyes was the determination that it would not be himself.

"We could draw straws," someone suggested.

"Shut up!"

They didn't want to think of it. And yet there was nothing else to think of. Their eyes lingered at the door, knowing that sooner or later the door would open and one of them would have to go.

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And in the motor room the captain climbed from a tube while Collins stood by. Masters wore a leaded suit that covered him from chin to feet.

"Well?" Collins asked.

Masters held out his hand. There were two pellets in his palm. "One should do it," he said. "Two to make sure. Come on."

"I didn't think you'd do it," Collins said carefully. "I still don't think you will."

Masters laughed, a queer bubbling laughter. "Come on," he repeated.

He went into the main chamber still laughing and stared down the men. "Five inside; six should do it," he said. He winked at Collins.

Someone sucked in a breath. The wheel had begun to turn. The door was swinging open.

"Stop sweating," Masters laughed. "I'll go first."

He looked at the Things that had entered. "Well, what are we waiting for?"

A thought came. *"There is disorder. There is obscurity."*

Collins froze inside. And then another thought. *"Ahva let them choose. We will take this one."*

At the door Masters turned. "See you in hell," he laughed. "We'll see who's afraid then."

The door closed. He was gone. Collins pressed his face to a porthole. They were leading Masters to the big hive with the burnished disk. They were almost there.

Masters staggered suddenly and Collins felt his heart drop. What if Masters didn't make it?"

But he *was* making it! He was being led inside now. He was turning. Collins saw his hand lift in a farewell gesture. On its way down the hand paused at Masters' mouth.

"Belts on!" Collins shouted.

He raced for the control room, thinking for the first time the thoughts he had not allowed himself to think until Masters had reached the great hive.

"Belts!" he shouted once more as he flung himself into the pilot's seat and snapped on his own belt.

His fingers sped over the instrument panel. Motors roared to life, straining at an invisible leash. The degrav was on now. It was just a question of time.

How much time? How long would it take? They knew now that something was wrong. Through the porthole Collins could see them coming at the ship. *How long?*

He stopped wondering.

There was no longer a hive. There was no longer a city of hives. There was only an immense flame that burgeoned outward.

And then no longer a flame. The leash was off and the flame and the great cloud that mushroomed upward were far behind.

It was half the battle, Collins thought. And now for the other half.

They were back on grav. He let in the manual control that threw the ship into a spin, felt it take hold. The feeling of oppression was there, the weight on his chest.

It grew and he let it grow until it was almost unbearable. Then as darkness closed in he flipped over the switches. His last thought was a prayer.

IN THE control room there was quiet. Through the porthole a nova was visible, flaming brightly against the blackness. The girl sighed.

"I still don't understand what happened."

"It was simple," Collins said. "Masters went down into the tubes and swallowed five pellets. He brought up two with him. Just as he entered that hive he swallowed the other two. It was more than enough

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for a critical mass."

She shuddered. "I thought it would be an adventure. It didn't turn out that way."

"You can write your paper as the first woman to enter and leave hyperspace alive."

"And the last, I hope." She shook her head. "Writing papers doesn't intrigue me any longer."

Collins smiled. "You're too pretty to spend your life writing papers. I think a career in marriage would be more suitable."

Even with glasses she looked beautiful. "With the right man."

"I'll try to help you find him," Collins said.

He put his arm around her waist and she didn't push it away. They stood for a while in silence, watching the nova through the porthole. The girl sighed again.

"He must have been a very brave man to do a thing like that. A very brave man."

Collins nodded, nor did he smile. "He was. They'll probably put up a monument to him."

Eventually they did...

ASTEROID INVASION!

★ By MILTON MATTHEW ★

NEWS, OF the scientific variety especially, leaks out slowly from behind the "iron curtain." Even such a detached remote science as astronomy produces news which the Soviets regard with caution. As a result of this policy of concealment, until very recently little has been known of a tremendous astronomical phenomenon. The Earth was struck, in February of nineteen forty-seven, by a huge flaming meteorite, undoubtedly an asteroid from the Martian Jovian belt!

Thousands of eyewitnesses in the region of the Sikhota Mountains in Siberia saw the event and later examined the damage done by the tremendous interstellar missile. Its initial flight was perfectly clear and visible as a flaming brilliant streak across the sky. It was travelling so fast that it was visible for no more than five seconds, but it left a black wake which persisted for some time.

The result of the collision was terribly impressive. Over the area of a solid square mile, the meteorite left its traces. A large number of holes in the Earth, as large as seventy-five feet in diameter and forty feet deep, were found. Large rocks and boulders on the side of the mountain where the asteroid struck, were shattered into fragments, and large numbers of trees, those which had not succumbed to fire and flame, were found bent at weird angles radial to the point of impact. The entire area was strewn with fragments of the asteroid, rock-iron masses, ranging in size from a few ounces to hundreds of pounds! Careful examination of the terrain and the effects enabled scientists to piece together pretty well, the original structure of this minor planet which struck the Earth.

Essentially it was a mass of iron weighing about a thousand tons, and perhaps thirty feet or so in diameter—this of course, before it struck the atmosphere. At the terrific speed with which it was travelling it was inevitable that the tremendous heat of friction plus the impact with the Earth's atmosphere, would break up this mass into thousands of smaller ones which actually struck the mountain side.

These smaller pieces hurtled Earthward at a tremendous velocity compressing the air in front of them and producing powerful shock waves, which were the actual causers of the damage rather than the impact of the iron masses themselves. It is suspected that the asteroid may have attained a temperature of five thousand degrees centigrade in the course of its friction with the air and its subsequent breaking up!

It is interesting to note that this destructive asteroidal body struck a mountain relatively close to the Russian city of Vladivostak. Consider the effect of it striking the city itself! But apparently in these matters, chance protects Earthlings, for there is no record despite the surprisingly large number of meteors of size, of any having landed in densely populated areas. The result might be compared with the atomic bomb!

It is believed that this recent meteor, though imcomparably smaller than the one which made the Arizona Crater at Flagstaff, is still the second largest to strike the Earth.

* * *

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RAINBOW IN THE HOUSE!

★ By CHARLES RECOUR ★

THE MOANING and the groaning has reached a mighty crescendo! When's it coming, they cry! It's been promised for years! What? Why, color television of course!

No one can blame the general public for raising such a hue and cry. They're entitled to it, especially in light of how patiently they endured the glowing promises of television twenty years ago! It took a long time for the magic box to come into the living room and it's taken quite a while for that black box to develope a rainbow spectrum—but it's coming—and fast! People remark on how quickly net-work radio blossomed and compare its development with the much slower paced TV and colored TV. But the comparison isn't quite valid and there are a lot of good reasons why things took as long as they did.

The main reason for the slow emergence of these magic electromagnetic instruments lies, paradoxically, in their very rapidity of development. Things came so fast and so furious that technology couldn't be frozen lest the gadget be obsolete before it reached a market! In addition, everybody wants to use the ether, police, industry, government, amateurs, and radio and TV broadcasting; but there is a limited spectrum. It's assignment must be studied. All of these sound reason contributed to the relatively slow fruition of the kinescopic art. These same reasons more than any other have held up the colorful kaleidoscope we've come to expect.

But it pays off in the long run, does patient slow emergence like this. The end product is that much nearer perfection. Striking a balance between speed of presentation and soundness of engineering hasn't been easy—but it's been done.

The technological end has required a lot of thinking too. Contrary to popular opinion, there is no surfeit of brains or ideas. In fact there's a sad lack, and a good man can always get a hearing. Right now engineering and science are at the point wherein application has outrun theory. In other words there are enough musclemen —we need *ideas!* And an idea, like a good man, is a hard thing to find. One physicist summed up the whole situation nicely when he said: "There'll always be a cyclotron around for the use of a man with an idea!"

THE VANISHING SMOKESTACK!

★ By SANDY MILLER ★

THEY CALLED coal "black diamonds;" those grim and grimy pioneers of the Industrial revolution, and the name was apt. For possessors of that precious material became the rulers of the Earth. We've seen it clearly. The United States, Great Britain, Germany, and now Russia, are lands which have huge coal deposits running through them—and they're the countries which have ruled the ways of men. Atomic power will someday change this undoubtedly, but until reactors are available to everyone, generating all the power needed, coal will rule.

Coal of course is taking a licking from oil, that's true. Strikes and mining troubles have put oil in the lime-light, making it the prime requirement of a modern civilization. The internal combustion engine has also made oil the prime mover. But the trouble is that oil supplies are limited. They won't run out for a long time, but eventually there simply won't be enough to go around. And men will have to come back to primeval coal. For coal can be converted into liquid fuel to feed the insatiable maw of the gas engine.

Knowing these facts and these trends, the coal industry is looking to the future and plans are being made to fit this inexhaustible fuel to our high pressure system: Coal technology is taking two forms. In one instance the methods of digging it from the ground, are being utterly changed. The miner with his pick and shovel will be an anachronism shortly. Powerful machines which can bite and eat their way into a seam are rolling from the assembly lines. Conveyor belts deliver the coal to the mine head. The mechanization is almost complete. All that remains is to apply it and this is being done.

The second new technique being studied everywhere where coal is mined, is the underground gasification of this fuel. Whole mines are set on fire and by controlling the burning rates and areas, rich fuel gases may be dawn directly from the mines with no more digging that the small hole necessary to insert the ignition pipe!

Both methods of utilizing the abundant limitless quantities of coal with which nature has endowed us, will be used lavishly in the very near future. The only conceivable element which might change this scheme of things, is the possible application of atomic energy to electric power production. As yet we can't safely predict that this will or will not be done soon. It remains a great unknown. We hope that it comes true soon. Until that time however, we'll use Nature's gifts...

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RADIO CITY — 2000!

☆ By LESLIE PHELPS ☆

THE ENTERTAINMENT world is being ravished by the merciless cruelty of television. Television is knocking the props from every traditional form of amusement: radio, sports, the theater, movies, games—you name it—television has inserted an insidious foot and it's too late to drive out the invader.

The question is; what will be the ultimate end of all this? What will the entertainment of the future be like? Are citizens of the year two thousand going to be nothing more than pairs of eyes glued to full-color, three-dimensional large-size TV screens?

Things aren't quite as bad as they seem. Actually the first statement was an exaggeration. The entertainment world isn't being destroyed; on the contrary, it's fluorishing—but in a vastly different form. Television is the technique which revived the theater, brought back the two-a-day, and ressurected vaudeville! For television *is* a hungry insatiable monster demanding ever more and more material to feed its gaping maw—eyes...

Consequently all the fields we have at first examined will flourish in the future as never before. Sports, theater, cinema, radio—all will be in tremendous demand. The only difference, as is already becoming quite clear, people will not leave their homes to attend any activity, not when it's available in much more comfort at the flick of a switch, the turn of a dial.

Consequently, we can envision vast studios, enormous structures housing equipment for everything from football to puppet opera. In this labyrinthine jungle of equipment the ubiquitous television cameras will roam, searching and spreading endless hours of amusement.

The future will see on tap in the home, every form of entertainment known to the theatrical world. This condition is rapidly being approximated today when one can have at one's finger-tips a baseball game, a quizz session or an opera. True television at present is a strange medium, pouring out vast amounts of incredibly bad material. But a great portion of this is due to the hostility and opposition of the short-sighted cinema moguls, the narrow-eyed theater peoples and the eager sports promoters, none of whom have any idea—yet—to take advantage of the opportunities proffered by the medium. But the solution is coming and when it does, brother!—then we'll see.

The TV City of the future, say about nineteen eighty or two thousand, will make all our present standards ridiculously small. The enormous sound and TV stages, the vast sports arenas, the gigantic theaters—all will exist in quantity and quality undreamed of, pouring out the flood of entertainment demanded by two hundred million Americans—and possibly the rest of the world too! The preview and the suggestion are exciting, heady and promising. It's coming though—as surely as the Lord made little apples...

NEGLIGENCE . . .

☆ By JUNE LURIE ☆

THE MARTIAN rocket *Szor-II* rested on its tail fins while the tentacled crewmen loaded their precious cargo of uranium aboard. The ruined sprawling shell of a Terran airfield—or what had once been one—contrasted horribly with the slim torpedo whose nose pointed skyward.

"We will be doing this endlessly, Zan," the rustling hiss of sound came softly in the control room of the rocket. The speaker, a heavily feathered Martian, like all his kind, wrinkled his leathery face in a grimace intended to be a grin.

"Yes," the captain answered, "the few Terrans left are dying out rapidly. How wise we were to strike so thoroughly. There is no end to Uranium on this planet, it seems." He glanced at an instrument on the panel. "We take off in twenty minutes. Check with the loading crews, Caj."

"I will sir," the other trilled, "but I'd like to ask a question. What is that funny object there by the upended concrete?"

"Where?—oh that?—that's a Terran weapon—a gun of some kind. Don't worry about it. Perfectly harmless. We haven't time to destroy everything." His voice broke in a piping shrill of laughter...

But...

The figure crouched in the jumbled concrete ruins might have been human once. But now it was a parody of humanity. The radiation burns and the subsequent deviations had turned it into a ghastly hulk of cell tissue with barely recognizable

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distinctions like arms and legs. But the eyes burning in their sockets were brilliant and intense.

And the mind that inhabited that repulsive body was clear. Johnny Lamont stared at the Martian rocket with fury and with hatred. And then his gaze shifted back to the rusted tube of the anti-aircraft gun towering over him.

"Baby," he crooned audibly, "you're going to work—you must." It was a prayer. Painfully he shifted his seared body over the broken concrete, the twisted girders, and slid up behind the breech of the weapon. The skeleton manning it crumpled into shards of bone as he touched the gunner's seat. Awkwardly he forced his warped body into the seat and started to play with the controls.

Slowly, groaningly the rusted structure moved and the muzzle of the rusty weapon shifted slightly. Lamont's breathing was fast now. He looked at the familiar breech and then began scraping away the dust and dirt vigorously, ignoring the wracking pains shooting through his body. There were corroded shell cases in a clip, five of them. Painfully he broke them free and tested them, fitting them one by one into the breech. The mechanism protested by finally cooperated.

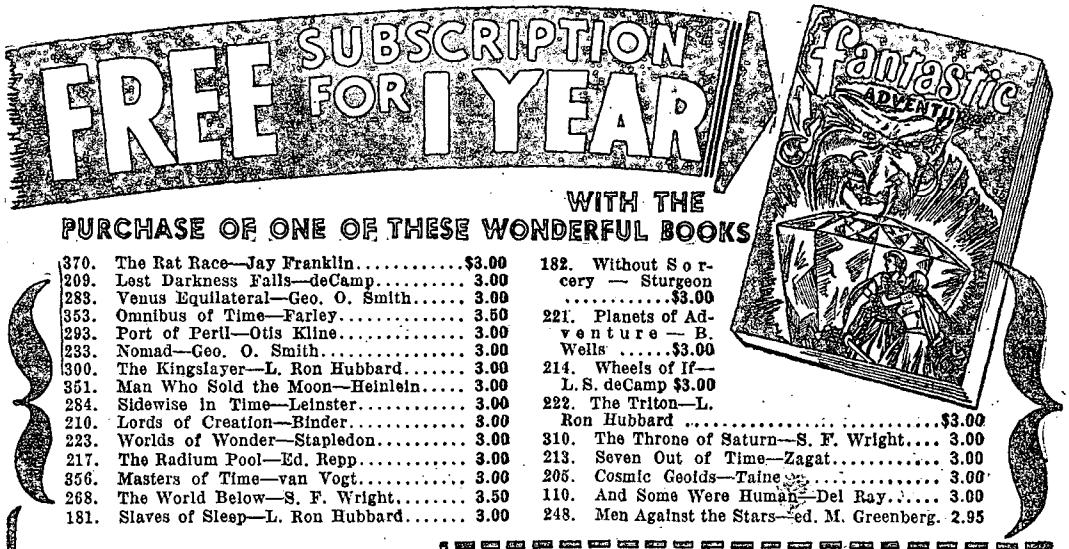
Cursing, breathing heavily and dribbling saliva in his concentrated anxiety, Johnny got the gun ready to fire. He had to hurry now. He could see the last of the Martians climbing aboard the vertical rocket and the faint whisp of smoke from the stern tubes told him the vessel was about ready to blast off.

Praying and sobbing aloud, Johnny depressed the gun muzzle with the hand wheels. The heavy ninety millimeter barrel slowly came down and tilted into line with the rocket. Johnny centered the barrel—the sights were gone into jumbled junk—directly on the lower third of the rocket, the portion which contained the fuels and controls. He adjusted the azimuth with the handwheel. The gun was trained perfectly now.

He touched the firing stud and the beaten old gun responded. It fired three times automatically before the rusted mechanism gave up the ghost and exploded. The gun, Johnny, and the surrounding concrete mingled together in a vast cloud of dust. But Johnny died with a smile on his twisted face.

The rocket no longer existed. When the second shell struck, there was a cataclysmic eruption of smoke and flame and the Martian vessel disappeared in a coruscant flare of light as thirty tons of liquid oxygen devoured the combustible fuels...

And when the smoke settled the sun shone down peacefully on a placid scene ...and somewhere in the air there seemed to be a promise of more revenge for others...all Earthmen were not dead...



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READER'S PAGE

PROPHECY?

Dear Mr. Hamling:

Your editorial in the July issue was most interesting—my congratulations on it and your courage. Your convictions, set forth boldly in this manner, will give many an unbeliever in the possibility of interplanetary travel food for thought, especially if they are familiar with your background.

I have read just about every publication of science fiction printed since the early '30's. No need to go into details as to the "degree" I've reached as a fan, but believe it or not this is my first letter to an editor.

Comment on individual stories I've read would take reams of paper, and try the patience of the both of us (I can't read my writing after it's cold either). I'd like to make a blanket comment but a sincere one. They're all good entertainment. I don't believe I could place a mental blot on any of them. I hate to criticize except constructively, and not being a writer or an editor—not even a good science student, I'm not qualified for it.

To me, it is a privilege to share the wonderful inspiration of each writer. A novelist draws from the life around him, but a stf writer is truly inspired and deserves the credit of originality that is his alone.

FANTASTIC especially appeals to me because of the spiritual type of story it often features. I'm sure many of your writers are truly inspired from "outside" their imaginations. I agree with all who would like to see less application of facts in the criticisms of your readers of fantastic *fiction.*

Man can no longer scoff at and ignore the predictions in the pages of these wonderful magazines of yours and your increased circulation is the proof that he is wisening up. How can anyone say anything is impossible in the face of the scientific accomplishments of the last century?

My sincere congratulations on past accomplishments to the staff of FANTASTIC and AMAZING; my hopes for your future with more and more fine stories, new writers and eventually in the not too distant future the proof that *we* have been right all along—all go to you in this poor but none the less sincere letter.

A. E. Doone
Penacook, New Hampshire

Many things have been predicted and come to pass already in the pages of stf magazines. Space flight is not a prediction any longer, it is simply the next step ..... Ed.

HITTING THE HIGH SPOTS!

Dear Editor:

Science fiction is really hitting the high spots! I always enjoy your magazines so much (FA and AMAZING). I'm eagerly waiting for the movie you discussed and have lately been enjoying s-f on the radio. I hear it on Sunday evening here in the west. I believe the title is "2000 Plus". It is really pretty good. The last couple of stories were set in the year 2020.

I'm not going to offer any critical opinions of your authors or stories— I enjoy nearly all of them. I thought the last "Toffee" story very good once the author got past the Thorne Smith style and used his own. The plot really picked up then.

Your covers are really good, too. Once in a while I'm tempted to repaint one and send it in (amateur a ist, you know) but then I get cold feet. The outside of your magazines are as outstanding as the inside.

Mrs. C. L. Salin
General Delivery
Marin City, California

You're going to see quite a few stf movies from now on, we feel sure. The field is expanding by leaps and bounds—and FA will keep abreast of it.....Ed.

OUTSTANDING STORY

Dear Editor:

"You're All Alone" by Fritz Leiber, lead story for July, was outstanding. It was unusual with a clever style of writing and an imaginative plot. I sincerely hope that Mr. Leiber will appear again soon.

The other tales were equally good. The short-short by Albert Bernsen, "Author Unknown", packed a pleasant punch at the end. This O. Henry type ending is good because it jolts the reader into thoughtfulness. "The Ice Cream Tree" by H. B. Hickey mixed some entertaining fantasy into FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. "The Reluctant Genii" by Costello, "The Broken Doll" by Fairman, "Survival" by Mc-

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Givern, and "End of Your Rope" by Bloch were all nearly par.

Artist H. Sharp produced some good pictures. The best were on pages 23 and 57. Robert G. Jones better stick to cover illustrations from what I saw of his drawings on the inside of FA.

A letter writer, Mrs. Mary Bitters, asked in the July issue whether a new magazine with just weird stories could be started. This idea is food for thought. Editors take notice, please. But, though I like her idea, it must be noted that there is a magazine called WEIRD TALES.

I see that Robert Bloch is coming up with "The Devil With You". It looks good.

Point one: stories need improvement. Point two: a longer letter section. FA is a fine enough magazine to contain a bigger section for letters. "The Reader's Page" is the first thing to which I turn when purchasing FA.

Francis M. Mulford
512 Linwood Avenue
Buffalo 9, New York

What about point three: points one and two are being taken care of!.....Ed.

NO SPACESHIPS, HE SAYS!

Sirs:

"You're All Alone" was some story. I hope that there will be more stories by Fritz Leiber. I have not been reading stf for a long time, but it had an idea that I never heard of. "The Broken Doll" came second. "Author Unknown" is third.

"End of Your Rope" beat "The Ice Cream Tree" because of the wings to prove the story. "The Reluctant Genii" and "Survival" were tied for sixth place.

I can't wait till next month. I hope I'm not disappointed. I think that there is too much room from the beginning of the page to the first letter. The July issue seemed like a new magazine—no spaceships. I hope it will stay that way unless it is a story with both—mostly fantasy.

So long till next month.

Joe Harding
307 East 70th Street
New York 21, New York

We've got the kind of story you want, Joe, and you'll be pleased, we think.....Ed.

THREE OUT OF SEVEN

Sirs:

As much as I hate to say this, I only enjoyed three of the seven stories in the July issue, (usually my enjoyment rating is a lot higher). I rated the stories this month as follows:

1) "You're All Alone"—I am hoping for a sequel half as good. It couldn't be

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better.

2) "Survival"—Is *anyone* perfect?

3) "Author Unknown"—The stf point is dubious but I liked the general theme of the story.

4) "The Ice Cream Tree"—The man was bringing up his children in the best way he knew how, but, because it did not conform to the stranger's way of living, he takes them away from their parents. It left a bitter taste.

5) "The Broken Doll"—How it got by the wastebasket I don't honestly know.

6) Last place was a tie between two stories, mainly because I do not care for series stories in general; I do like the Toffee series though, but the Lefty Feep and Reggie Van Schuyler stories I have no use for. Yes, I do read them anyway to see if I can get interested in them but it's no go.

With regards for more and better issues.

Philip J. Hennessy Jr.
268 Hancock Street
Dorchester, Mass.

Your comments on series characters is interesting. We're pleased to know you do like "Toffee". Who wouldn't!.....Ed.

THE MOON BOUNCE AGAIN

Dear Mr. Hamling:

It isn't in my nature to practice bootlicking in order to get a letter printed. I say this because of my forthcoming opinion of "You're All Alone", which I consider a classic of fantasy.

Fritz Leiber is, of course, one of the top writers in the fantasy field. However, I never thought that even he could come up with a novel as wonderful as "You're All Alone". There was a certain *strangeness* to the story which defies description. In addition, the characters were well-drawn, the plot wonderfully different, and the general quality remarkable. This is certainly one of the finest fantasies ever written. Sharp's illustrating added (if that is possible) to the story. In my opinion, he is the only top-flight interior illustrator you have. Jones is fine on the cover, but weak in black-and-white. So how's about using Finlay again, and maybe some of the other modern fantasy illustrators?

The stories by Bloch, McGivern, and Costello rounded out a decidedly above average issue.

In answer to those who thirst for my blood for daring to dispute the fact that the moon could have bounced from the earth millenia ago, I offer:

1) In order for the moon to fall and strike the earth, the sun's gravitational field would have to cease to exist, for a period of time, at least. Therefore, the planet, too, would be attracted to the body exerting the most "pull" on it, possibly Jupiter. This could result in various and sundry possibilities, but instead of pursuing them, I would like to ask Allen May, "How in the heck did the moon fall, in the first place?" Once this has been answered to my satisfaction, I'll argue the matter further.

2) To Brian McNaughton—Sure, I can take and enjoy fantasy without questioning its scientific validity. I don't believe in ghosts, or vampires, or beasties that go boomp i' the night, but I like to read about them. If you'll remember, Brian, it was *you*, not me, who brought up the question of the moon-bounce possibility, in the first place.

Good as it was, nothing could have been more out of character in relation to "You're All Alone" then your cover.

In closing, I'd like to inivite all New York and vicinity to join a new and fast-growing fan club, the Bronx Science-Fiction Society. Those interested can get further information on the group by contacting me.

Morton D. Paley
1455 Townsend Ave.
New York 52, N. Y.

We don't agree with you on the cover you speak of, Mort. That was a symbolic scene, and as fine a job as we've had in many months. Or is it that you just don't care for symbolism? .....Ed.

THEY'RE TAKING HIM AWAY!

Dear Mr. Hamling:

You have published a masterpiece! I refer, of course to the July cover illustration. Besides being well drawn, the combination of colors was perfect. Jones has been turning out some rather poor covers lately; but the July cover proves that he is still one of the top stf artists. Three cheers for Robert Gibson Jones!

All the yarns were excellent this issue, too. The best one was "You're All Alone". It's a pleasure to read such a thoroughly original story.

"End of Your Rope" and "The Reluctant Genii" tie for second honors. It's amazing how many different variations authors can make on such an ancient idea as a genii.

About this weird-fantasy business: I think you should publish any kind of fantastic story, whether it concerns rocket ships, werewolves, or just plain ordinary every-day ghosts. I certainly have no objection to "ghoulies and ghosties and long-legged beasties and things that go 'bump' in the night".

But then, stories don't necessarily have to be about vampires or werewolves to be wierd—Lovecraft could write a yarn of spine-chilling horror against a scientific or pseudo-scientific background; his "Col-

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our Out of Space", published in AMAZING STORIES, was just such a yarn.

I don't think many would object to your publishing weird stories, since eighty percent, at the very least, of all stf fans are also horror fans. (Please be quiet, the meager 20% who are now all shrieking in unison. "T'ain't so.")

I'm glad to see that you have done away with the thoroughly boring heading,

"Sirs:"

I must close now, for I fear that the four men in black hats have spotted me.

Brian McNaughton
198 Bergen Place
Red Bank, New Jersey

Glad you liked the issue—and the cover. As to the weird yarns, we still haven't heard many opinions on the subject..Ed.

NEW FAN CLUB

Dear Ed:

We would like to announce the formation of our organization, "The Tri-State STFantasy Club" in the following areas: Iowa, Illinois and Missouri. All fans in these areas are asked to get in touch with me at the address given below.

Donald Myers
1507 S. 7th Street
Keokuk, Iowa

O.K. Don, there you are.....Ed.

WHERE'S ROG PHILLIPS?

Dear Editor:

"You're All Alone" was a great novel. It almost starts you thinking.

"The Reluctant Genii" by Costello was a good novelet too. My congratulations to you for a pretty good pair of stories but I think I have read too many stories about geniis to really enjoy it.

"Author Unknown" by Bernsen may have been a short-short but it was the best short. I guess the others didn't strike my fancy.

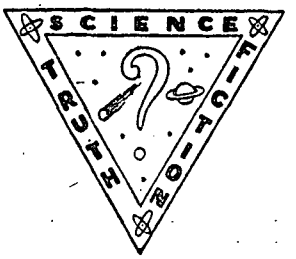
Still didn't see anything by Rog Phillips, but your July ish of FA was pretty good anyhow.

Gerald Hibbs
Box 852
Detroit Lakes, Minnesota

Rog Phillips is a pretty busy man these days. He's turning out pocketbooks, doing stf radio scripts, and still managing to turn out top magazine fiction. You'll be seeing some new Phillips yarns soon..Ed.

HEY! STFANS!

AT LAST



AT LAST

A MEANS OF RECOGNITION for us fans!

I have designed a pin that is totally symbolic—the shape and design (shown above, twice actual size) and even the colors (black, green, and gold) all have a Science Fictional meaning. This isn't a cheap trinket, either. Made to give you years of service. Equipped with a safety-clasp so it won't lose easily. The price—one buck (tax and post. incl.). I wanted to charge less, but old man High Expenses told me not to. This pin is just the thing for you fans who have your own clubs or fanzines, or attend the conventions, or who just want to know each other. If you would like to start a club, toss in a dime and as soon as I get my lists compiled I'll send you a list of fans in your state. The symbolic meaning of the pin will be sent with your order. So come on, fans, send in $1.00 today, and—LET'S KNOW EACH OTHER!

Earl "Plaster" Parris
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WHOA, THERE!

Dear Ed:

First, I want to tell you I am not the type to write long and windy letters to an editor. But every now and then I get mad. I'm mad now!

The story "You're All Alone" was no good. When one makes only $27.98 a week and pays 25c for a storybook with that in it, then it's time to quit reading.

But now, if you were going to put some more in like "The Shades Of Toffee", then let me tell you I'd buy them if it took my last cent.

R. S. Baxter
411 Solar Blvd.
Watertown 4, New York

R.S., you floor us! Believe it or not, yours is the one and only letter we've received disliking the Leiber story. Maybe you better read it again, huh? .....Ed.

FROM DOWN-UNDER!

Dear Sir:

As a reader of Fa since it's beginning in 1939, it has often surprised me to notice that you have had virtually no letters in your "Reader's Page" from this part of the world. Since I cannot believe that you do not print letters from your fans "down under", the only conclusion I can come to is that we fans south of the Equator have been remiss about writing to you. Do not let the lack of letters from Australia delude you into believing you have no fans in this country; on the contrary, both FA and AMAZING rate very highly among all the fans in Australia and New Zealand.

I have no criticism of FA to make, other than that I regret you no longer feature Paul's back covers. Is there a possibility of featuring them once more in FA? One other point I would like to comment on; when you ran "The Man From Yesterday" by Lee Francis, a year or so ago, quite a number of letters were written to you, objecting to the unhappy ending. With all due respect to the fans who wrote those letters, I for one sincerely hope you will not reject a good story merely because the hero and heroine do not live happily ever after, or that you will spoil a good story by making the author write in a phony happy ending.

Your covers are probably the best of any fantasy magazine on the market. The inside illustrations are not as good, however. The best of your interior artists is St. John.

I would like to hear from any FA readers who would be willing to trade copies of FA QUARTERLIES for British hard-cover fantasy books.

Roger N. Dard
232 James Street
Perth
Western Australia

We're more than happy to welcome you into the gang, Roger. We always like to hear from our fans in other lands. And we're sure that you'll hear from a lot of fans on the swap suggestion.....Ed.

A MAGAZINE JUST FOR THE GALS!

Dear Editor:

A few words to thank you for an entertaining and interesting July issue. I am a newcomer in the reading of this type of magazine, but have made up for lost time, for I have searched the newsstands for all available material. I believe I have about 20 different mags, and I have waded through a lot of reading. Some of it I simply cannot get down, but then some are very good.

I believe the demand will grow and grow for this type of material if the supply will keep pace with QUALITY. All in all I like your type of stories much more than I do those carried in AMAZING STORIES. I also have your new astrology magazine, which looks very promising, though I have only glanced through it.

Incidentally, why not have some stories with the science of astrology worked in, and some with occult science? Surely there are writers who have actual knowledge of the science of the occult and could give us some good stories using ethereal bodies to travel to these planets. It can be done you know, and we could have factual knowledge about the types of beings living on these planets, etc. Seems to me this would offer endless possibilities for stories.

All in all, I enjoy fantasy tales much more than I do the scientific. It seems to me that your stories are almost all slanted to the masculine mind, rather than to the feminine. Why not a magazine of this type just for women?

It would be difficult for me to say which story I enoyed more in your July issue, for I liked every one of them, and that is the first time I can say that about any of these magazines that I have been reading of late.

"You're All Alone", was very interesting with a good plot, but the theme was pessimistic, and I'd rather read stories that give you hope and a lift. Dying isn't what most of us fear; it is living. It is easy to die, but so difficult to go on living. We need encouragement.

Thanks for the good stories, and I would like to hear from any readers interested in the occult. I like the letter department very much, but would like to

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know more about the people writing, what they do, think etc.

Naomi Holly
1142 Rancho Avenue
Colton, California

We can't really see where a definite slant is necessary in stf, Naomi. The fantasy type of story can be appreciated by guys and gals alike. How about that, gang..Ed.

LAST SURVIVOR . . .

★ By CAL WEBB ★

WE CAN'T recall the time or place, but some years ago we encountered a serious biological text which briefly mentioned a thought which though horrifying in its suggestiveness, was also fascinating, fascinating with the same repulsiveness with which one regards a snake.

The thought was phrased almost poetically and we regret that we can't recall it in that vein. But the writer said to the effect that, "...when the ant crawls out of the eye-socket in the skull of the remnants of the Last Man, he will survey his surroundings and say with pride, *'I* am the ruler now!'..."

For some reason, that little remark captured our imagination, and since it isn't so impossible to conceive, we've given it a good deal of thought. If man goes to war with himself and performs the supreme annihilation of the atomic bomb and radioactive dusts, it is possible he will vanish. But the hardy insect world will immediately set up a contender for his place; the ant, the cockroach, those hardy creatures existing since the beginning of time, will survive any man-made holocaust. And perhaps they will grin in triumph at our futile efforts to survive, and our gigantic efforts to destroy ourselves. It's a horrible thought—but *so* possible...

FOG AND FIRE

★ By A. MORRIS ★

WATER IS not the only substance used to extinguish fires. Scientists, while working to find better ways of combating flames, came across an effective combination which they call "wetter water." It is made of ordinary water plus certain chemicals which enable the liquid to penetrate far into the burning materials and to attack the gases which often form in flaming substances.

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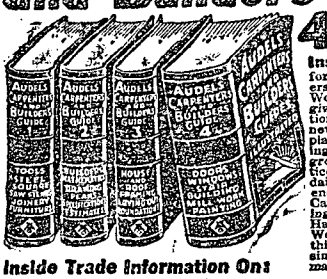

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A SCIENTIST'S WARNING!

★ By A. T. KEDZIE ★

IF ANYBODY is qualified to speak on the relationship between science and progress, that man is Dr. Norbert Wiener, mathematician, stimulator of the science of cybernetics, and important figure in the winning of the scientific portion of the last World War. Dr. Wiener has been accused of giving way a little too easily to fantasy—especially by those doubters who don't think that the time is coming when the machine will be able to do practically anything a man can do—but the fact of the matter is that his coldly rational logical brain sees the grim handwriting on the wall—and he begs us to heed it!

What Wiener says, in essence, is this: After the first flush of fear generated by the creation of the atomic and later the hydrogen bombs, most people have fallen into a lulled secure position, suggesting to themselves that after all, things won't be so bad. We'll be able to survive an atomic war. The scientists are just blowing their stacks. Men have always survived the most hideous inventions in the past—they'll do the same with this new weapon—atomics.

That, says Dr. Wiener, is a foolish, criminal, stupid, ignorant lie, induced by our dislike of thinking and of recognizing Death when we face it. To illustrate his point, Weiner clarifies with this: we have only had a decade of atomic development and already the weapons are incredible. Within a relatively short time we can expect to increase and strengthen these tools, until we reach the point where we will be able to *destroy the Earth.*

Here he shows an analogy. Toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, scientists learned how to liquefy gases, and each time they liquified one gas, they were able to do the same with another and more difficult one. This went on until the present when all gases can be or have been liquified. In other words, the scientific advance went on until its ultimate complete and final end.

The same thing is going to happen in atomic physics, Wiener maintains. Each succeeding advance in atomic weapons enables even more gigantic strides to be taken and the end result is the natural one—a result which may be either the poisoning of the atmosphere all over the Earth with radioactives, or possibly the conversion of our planet into a nova!

These ideas are not novel. But they've been pooh-poohed recently by many scientists and military men, intent apparently on lulling people into a false sense of security. After all, who would want to destroy an enemy if he had to destroy the whole world to do it? Wiener points out that a madman of the caliber of say, Hitler—or the present menace, could very well be imagined capable of such a *Goetterdaemerung*-like move. In other words it is possible that the science-fiction predicted destruction of the planet through atomics may yet come to pass.

Wiener concludes with an impassioned plea for men to come to their sense before it is too late. Even though science—atomics—slows down under government domination, it does go on, and it is likely that from the laboratories of the world in the not distant future, may emerge planet-crackers or atmosphere poisons inconceivable to us now. Therefore with everything so clearly in sight, do something Wiener begs, before some mad fiend uses the tools of atomic physics and once and forever destroys the Earth and all its inhabitants!

It's nice to think that Wiener may be wrong—but somehow a soft still voice whispers within the brain, "you know it isn't so, you know it isn't so..." Perhaps walking the Earth this very day is the man who will make the super discovery or whose hand will trigger the final holocaust.

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FABLES FROM THE FUTURE

★ By LEE OWENS ★

THE FISH DREDGER

WITH THE population of the world growing by leaps and bounds, the grimming skeleton of the hunger problem confronts us. There is simply not enough land to feed everybody by American standards. As a result that a good portion of the world lives on a semi-starvation diet. The greatest single reservoir of untapped resources, the oceans of the Earth, has not yet been invaded. But it is likely that eventually in spite of all the efforts of the hydroponics gardeners, we'll have to go to Man's ancient mother, the Sea, for some of our food.

Hugo Gernsback, the first editor of *Amazing Stories*, still demonstrates the fertility and cleverness of his thinking by suggesting that we start developing new methods of fishing. The ancient Phoenicians with their large scale employment of nets, fished very little differently than we do now. In fact, the fishing net is one of Man's oldest inventions. And yet we use it in the same way.

Gernsback points out that with the magic of sonar, the use of sound waves of high-frequency for tracking down submarines—we are able to locate large schools of fish. This has in fact already been done on a commercial scale by British, Swedish, and American fishing companies. In other words, it is no longer a problem locating fish. But we still use nets? Why?

The suggestion has been advanced that huge vacuum cleaner, suction pump hose be immersed right amidst the school of fish and that they be sucked right into the holds of the fishing vessels with the water allowed to drain off! And on the face of it, there appears to be no good reason why this ingenious system couldn't be employed.

We use enormous dredges in clearing harbors. These huge vessels carry long tubes three and four and five feet in diameter, dipping many feet into the sea and touching the bottom of the harbors. They suck up sand and mud which obstruct ship passage. Later the mud is dumped at sea.

Very often large amounts of fish accidentally wander into the gaping maw of the dredge and after an unpleasant round trip find themselves back in the sea. By modifying such a dredge, converting it into a nautical vacuum cleaner, there seems little reason why we shouldn't

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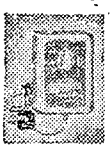

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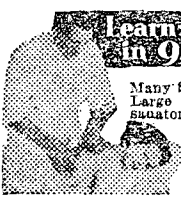

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Since we can both locate and capture fish by these technical means, it seems a waste of time to ignore the enormous amounts of health-giving foods which fill our oceans. Probably the main reason why nothing has been done is that economically there has been no great demand. But this could be created, and the day may come when it will be. Men must look more and more to the sea to find inexhaustible sources of foods, metals, chemicals and all the other resources which they are rapidly exhausting on land!

★ ★ ★

DON'T BE TOO SMART!

EVERY KID whose imagination has been captured by the wonders of science, inevitably becomes the family oracle. And no matter how modest he intends to be, he finds himself listened to with surprising respect when he's orating on some scientific principle which has escaped his less-intrigued family. This is a common experience and it isn't usually until he gets to the college level that he realizes that all the answers aren't in the books, or that they're a great deal more complicated than he originally thought.

I can remember a particular case which makes me blush with shame when I think of it. It concerned the matter of painting radiators, ordinary hot-water radiators for heating a home. Whenever the family cleaning was about to be done, I'd fight ferociously to convince the family that the radiators should be painted a dead jet black for maximum efficiency. I was proud that I knew this fact. Didn't the physics books all say that black was the color of the most efficient radiator? Didn't they say that metallic colored surfaces like those painted with aluminum or bronze paint, were poor heat radiators?

And how I argued with the family to do something about this. But always it remained adamant. "We're painting them with aluminum paint and that's all there is to it. I don't care what the books say," my mother would say—and that was that.

And so I believed myself to be an injured scientist, a junior Galileo, unrecognized and ignored. It wasn't until some years later when I sat in an actual laboratory and had the opportunity to test the radiating abilities of various surfaces that I realized that I should do a little more interpreting when I read.

The surface of a radiator is more important than the color!

We actually had a number of different surfaces heated to the same temperature. There was aluminum paint, black paint, copper, white paint, metals of different varieties and so on. We all expected, when the sensitive bolometer (delicate temperature indicator) was applied near the sur-

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faces, to see the black paint come out with the highest radiating ability. Imagine our surprise—and mine in particular—when the white painted surface proved to be the best radiator. Subsequent examination and explanation clarified the condition. The white-painted surface, was rough and grainy! A rough surface is a fine radiator regardless of its color. A polished black surface is a poor radiator.

Realization of this simple fact pinned back my ears.

The upshot of the whole thing is that in science you can't jump to text-book conclusions nor accept statements without careful examination. Nothing is usually as simple as it seems.

"All right, mother, paint the radiator white—you're right!" And she was, for the surface of the radiator was a sand casting—coarse and extremely rough!

★ ★ ★

ROCKET G-MEN!

THE BOYS who will man the first lunar and interplanetary rockets will have plenty of trouble. The dangers of radiations, lack of food and air and a host of other menaces have been weighed and considered by the engineers. And one of the biggest problems that the boys are going to run into, is being solved right here and now. Actually it's an oldie

It comes from Newton's good old First Law: "a body in motion or at rest tends to remain in that state." That simple little statement has caused and will cause a lot more trouble. Anybody who ever rode anything with wheels will recognize it. Inertia is that property of a body that is measured by its mass and which makes it keep going even when its surroundings change considerably. Jam on the brakes!

When you have the terrific thrust of a rocket in the process of taking off, it means that the occupants of that rocket have to be cushioned against splattering themselves up against the rear wall. The rocket goes ahead with a bang—but a man's body doesn't. Consequently provision has to be made for this.

Aircraft and jet pilots are particularly familiar with the devastating effects of "G". Sudden accelerations and decelerations are hard to deal with. When a pilot pulls out of a dive, his head and body tend to go right through the seat. They want to keep on going. Straps and pads cushion the effect and only occasionally does the terrific blood drainage black-out the pilot.

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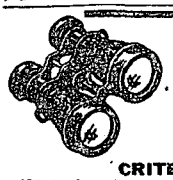

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Out of this research is coming the know-how of human rocketry. For one thing, humans will be so located in a rocket that they will be subjected to the minimum accelerations possible. Straps, braces, hydraulicly supported chairs, spring mounts, and cushions will take up the shock. Medicine is hunting certain drugs that will prevent momentary accelerations from blacking-out the rocketeers.

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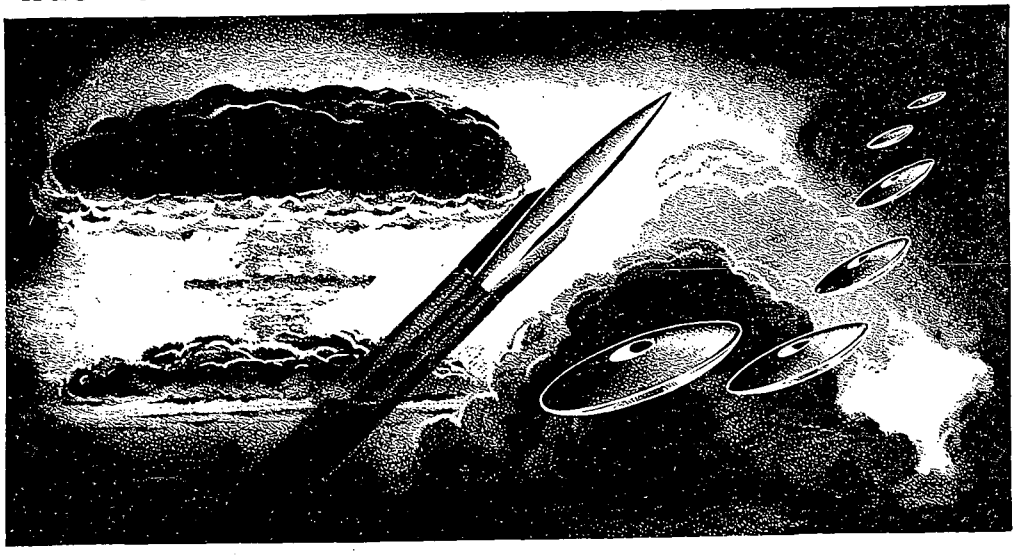

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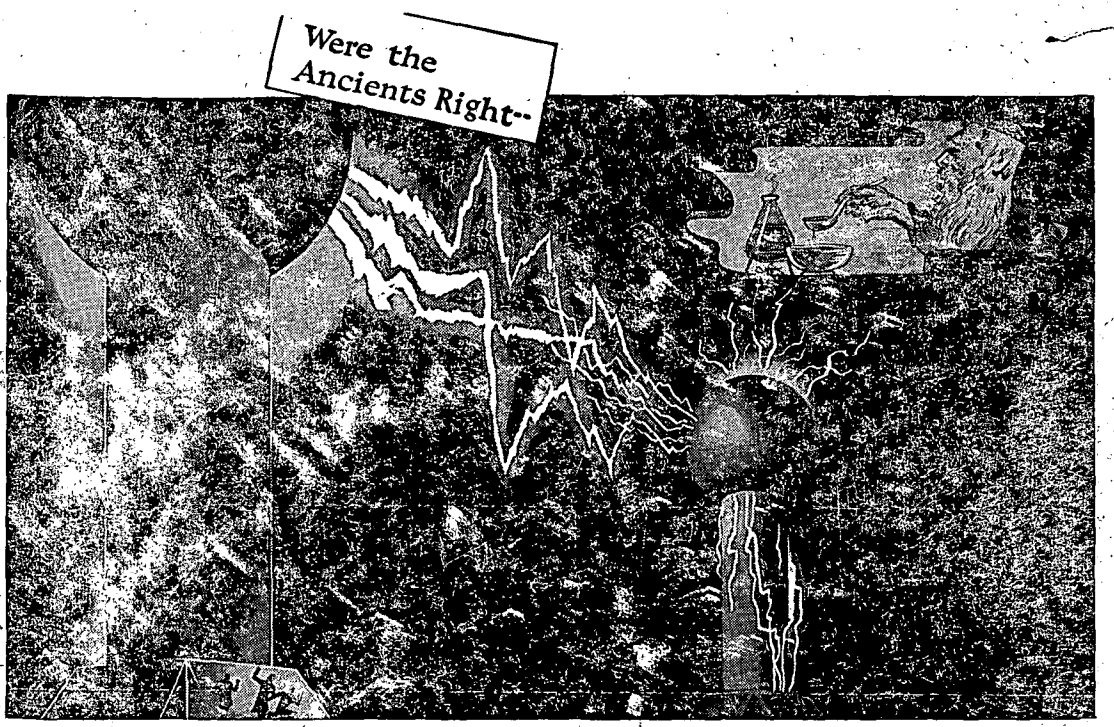
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